

A photograph of five children sitting on the ground in a shaded outdoor area, drawing large diagrams on sheets of paper. The children are wearing white shirts and are focused on their work. The background shows trees and a fence. A red curved line separates the top image from the bottom text area.

RESEARCH REPORT

Vol 2018 No 84

Representation and Inclusion in School Councils in Mozambique

Kátia Taela, Erika López Franco, Alex Shankland, Catija Maivasse,
Nárcya Chilengue and Claudino Goodyfry

May 2018

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Charity Registration Number 306371
Charitable Company Number 877338

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Cover photograph: Children drawing in a primary school in Rapale, Nampula, Mozambique
Photographer: Kátia Taela

Copy-editor: Kathryn O'Neill
Designer: Barbara Cheney
Proofreader: Beth Richard

Citation: Taela, K.; López Franco, E.; Shankland, A.; Maivasse, C.; Chilengue, N. and Goodyfry, C. (2018) *Representation and Inclusion in School Councils in Mozambique*, IDS Research Report 84, Brighton: IDS

Editors: Kátia Taela, Erika López Franco, Alex Shankland, Catija Maivasse, Nárcya Chilengue and Claudino Goodyfry

Published: May 2018

Copyright © Institute of Development Studies, 2018
ISBN: 978-1-78118-441-7
ISSN: 0141-1314
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Funding and competing interests: No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Summary

This study was conducted as part of the Citizen Engagement Programme (Programa Cidadania e Participação (CEP)) in Mozambique – an empowerment and social accountability initiative to improve the quality of education and health services by increasing citizens' influence on the management of schools and health units, the formulation of education and health policies, and the provision of education and health services. In education, CEP enabled citizen monitoring of services through the community scorecard (*Cartão de Pontuação Comunitária* (CPC)), focusing on the link between CPC action plans and the work plans of the co-management mechanism in schools – the school councils (*conselhos de escola*). CEP has also promoted the channelling of issues beyond the capacity and mandate of schools to higher levels of the national education system.

This work identified a need to better understand the role of school councils as a link between the school and the community, and also in escalating important matters to higher levels of management in the education system, beyond that of school authorities. It was in this context that the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and the Centre for Learning and Capacity Building for Civil Society (CESC), both members of the CEP consortium, proposed to undertake a qualitative study on representation and inclusion in school councils. The primary aim of this study was to widen the knowledge base available to civil society and to government on the factors that contribute to good performance by school councils in building inclusivity and social accountability to improve the quality of education services.

This qualitative study combined primary and secondary data and its methodology was structured to investigate inclusion, representation, and strategies for seeking support and solving problems within school councils. Primary data were collected using semi-structured interviews with key informants and focus group discussions which used participative techniques, in Monapo and Rapale districts (Nampula province), Sussundenga (Manica province), and Chokwè (Gaza province), which was also the location of the pilot phase of the study. The fieldwork was done in six public schools that cover the full range of ages defined by the term 'primary' in Mozambique (classes 1 to 7, with children aged 7 to 13) and are classified as type 1 schools on the numerical scale because they have more than 1,500 pupils registered. As to geographical distribution, two schools were chosen in Gaza (Chokwè district), two in Nampula (one in Rapale district, the other in Monapo district), and a further two in Manica (both in Sussundenga district). Fieldwork was carried out in May and June 2017, at locations where CEP and CESC had activities. The research focused on the provincial and district levels, but important information was also collected at the central level during two international events: an International Seminar organised by CESC in May 2017 and CEP's International Closing Seminar in December 2017.

This study is located within an increasingly large body of literature on the political representation exercised by actors outside the party political sphere, as is the case of school councils, whose function (according to the legislation) is to represent the population in decisions and in oversight of activities – that is to say, to act substantively for others (Pitkin 1967), but not through party political elections.

In this study we conceptualise political representation as a form of mediation in invited spaces (Gaventa 2006), i.e. spaces where citizens are invited to participate in decisions side-by-side with employees of the state. School councils are a typical example of this type of space, because they are established formally by a government policy, and are required to bring together professionals (teachers), managers (the head of the school), pupils, parents and guardians, and the wider community. In school councils, as in other 'invited spaces', only a small number of people can participate in practice, so each one of these major categories of participants is represented by a small number of individuals.

Following von Lieres and Piper's work (2014) we distinguish between mediation with a merely 'diplomatic' function (that is, only carrying messages between the citizen and the state) and mediation with an 'educative' function (which also entails helping both sides to achieve a better understanding of the points of view of the other); we also consider whether the mediation is to be 'captured' to serve the interests of the mediator more than the interests of the citizens and/or the state. The idea of mediation demands attention to the different spaces (created, invited, and closed) and levels (local, national, and global) that mediators navigate and the different forms of power (invisible, hidden, and visible) operating in each situation (Gaventa 2006).

Considering this conceptualisation of representation and mediation as 'taking messages back and forth between different spaces and levels', the origin of these messages emerges as a fundamental question: whose perceptions, demands, or priorities do they represent? This is what makes it so important to analyse *inclusion* in the processes of representation and mediation. Not all groups or individuals have access to these spaces. *Inclusion* determines *which* perceptions and priorities are incorporated into the processes of representation, and which are left out of the agenda of the decisions of the council and the list of issues to be taken to other levels. It is in the light of this operational framework that we present and analyse the main results of this study.

The establishment of school councils was part of broader efforts by the education sector to forge closer links between schools and the local community, developed since the time of Mozambique's independence and inspired by the experience of the 'liberated zones' during the fight for national liberation. In this context, the Ministry of Education and Human Development (MINEDH) has developed various initiatives for strengthening the role of school councils to ensure greater involvement of the community in school matters and to improve the significance of each school for its surrounding community. These initiatives have been developed in partnership with various bilateral and multilateral organisations and also by various Mozambican and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs). One aspect that was evident from the review of documents and the fieldwork was the sizeable gap between: (a) the way that MINEDH envisaged school councils would work and the expectations of various people and parties involved about their role (especially those who implement programmes of support to the education sector); and (b) the real conditions and possibilities that school councils have.

School councils fall very short of their expected role, and although they are made up of 'representatives' of different groups, there is a major gap of representation, rooted in the school community's understanding about what representing means,

and in how school council representatives are chosen, and who, as a result, remains outside the school management processes; the implication is that only members of the school council are involved. School councils were supposed to be the voice of the community in the school, and the voice of the school in the community. However, there is a considerable tension between performing the two roles. In all the schools we visited, the school council tended to be more at the service of the school than of the community, which means that the priorities tend to be set by the school and not by the community.

This is influenced, among others, by the process of electing school council members, the composition of the school council and members' profiles, school council members' perceptions on why they were chosen, and their motivation for becoming a member of the school council. The main channels used by head teachers to disseminate information about the election of the school council are the community leaders and, in some cases, faith leaders. In none of the schools visited did anyone talk about using community radio or local, or wall, newspapers. Usually those who take part in an election process are close to the school and/or to its head teacher, or close to the community leaders. The representatives of the community and the school council are most frequently political-party leaders, leaders in local governance, and religious leaders, or people working in development projects, who live close to the schools.

Even so, being a member of the school council does not automatically mean having a voice and power to influence developments. The rules of hierarchical and patriarchal power inhibit the voice of women and children in decision-making. The use of technical language (or simply of the official national language, in places where most people express themselves only in the local language) can function to intimidate people with little or no schooling. These forms of 'invisible power' can reinforce the inequalities resulting from formal rules and networks of influence, and even further exclude the poorest and most marginalised people.

We observed that factors such as geographical proximity to the school, age, gender, and political-party affiliation influence which citizens are chosen as a member of the school council. Of the school councils we visited, most comprised people who live in the immediate local neighbourhood of the school. This disparity is perceived as something positive by the people we interviewed, who argued that this facilitates communication, the holding of meetings, and the solving of problems. However, the weak or non-existent representation of the more distant neighbourhoods on the school council has consequences for the link between the schools and the residents of those neighbourhoods. Also, while parents and guardians may be called to meetings, the objectives of the meetings are not made explicit, thus they cannot make informed decisions.

To be a member of the school council does not automatically mean having power of influence with regards to representation in seeking support and solutions to problems. Members of school councils face several difficulties in identifying actors that can collaborate and/or to whom they can channel problems they identify – i.e. the power to advocate. They are not prepared enough to engage in processes of advocacy and they do not have alternative mechanisms (other than the district education authorities) for channelling their concerns to other levels of the education sector. Excessive obedience to authority and hierarchy inhibit their

creativity and tend to contain pro-activeness. However, the study showed the difference that capacity building and access to information can make.

The study did not aim to evaluate the CEP, but to understand how questions of representation and inclusion affect school councils. However, given that it was carried out in the ambit of the programme, and that the programme has worked with school councils, we have also investigated its contribution to strengthening (i) representation and inclusiveness in school councils and (ii) the process of finding solutions to problems. This contribution took place in four ways: (i) supporting provincial management and district education services in creating/renewing school councils and building their capacity; (ii) helping the education authorities in their efforts to improve the tools and processes used to supervise and monitor school councils; (iii) creating spaces for school councils to discuss and share experiences; and (iv) helping to fund training of school councils, visits for monitoring and supervision, and a provincial schools councils conference (in Gaza).

Keywords: school councils; representation; inclusion; Mozambique.

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Funder acknowledgements

This report is an output of the Citizen Engagement Programme (Programa Cidadania e Participação (CEP)) in Mozambique – an empowerment and social accountability initiative to improve the quality of education and health services by increasing citizens' influence on the management of schools, the formulation of education policies, and the provision of education services. The programme was financed by the United Kingdom (Department for International Development (DFID)), the Republic of Ireland (Irish Aid), and Denmark (Danish International Development Agency (Danida)). It was implemented by a consortium of organisations in Mozambique, including: COWI Moçambique Lda, Centro de Aprendizagem e Capacitação da Sociedade Civil (Centre for Learning and Capacity Building for Civil Society (CESC)), N'weti Comunicação para a Saúde, Kwantu, Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Save the Children, and Oxford Policy Management as well as local non-governmental organisations Facilidade, Watana, Associação Nacional para o Desenvolvimento Auto-Sustentado (National Association for Self-Sustaining Development (ANDA)), Associação de Apoio ao Desenvolvimento (Association for Development Support (NANA)), Nova Vida, Organização para o Desenvolvimento da Comunidade (Organization for Community Development (OCSIDA)), and Vukoxa in the provinces of Gaza, Manica, Nampula, and Zambézia over a five-year period from September 2012 to June 2017.



Acronyms

ADE	Apoio Directo às Escolas [Direct Support for Schools fund]
ANDA	Associação Nacional para o Desenvolvimento Auto-Sustentado [National Association for Self-Sustaining Development]
CEP	Programa Cidadania e Participação [Citizen Engagement Programme]
CESC	Centro de Aprendizagem e Capacitação da Sociedade Civil [Centre for Learning and Capacity Building for Civil Society]
CPC	<i>Cartão de Pontuação Comunitária</i> [community scorecard]
CSO	civil society organisation
DFID	Department for International Development
DPEDH	Provincial Directorate of Education and Human Development
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
MINEDH	Ministério da Educação e Desenvolvimento Humano [Ministry of Education and Human Development]
NANA	Associação de Apoio ao Desenvolvimento [Association for Development Support]
NGO	non-governmental organisation
OCSIDA	Organização para o Desenvolvimento da Comunidade [Organization for Community Development]
PTA	parent–teacher association
SDEJT	District Services for Education, Youth and Technology
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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1 Introduction

1.1 Study context and objectives

This study was conducted as part of the Citizen Engagement Programme (Programa Cidadania e Participação (CEP)) in Mozambique – an empowerment and social accountability initiative to improve the quality of education and health services by increasing citizens' influence on the management of schools, the formulation of education policies, and the provision of education services. The programme was financed by the United Kingdom (Department for International Development (DFID)), the Republic of Ireland (Irish Aid), and Denmark (Danish International Development Agency (Danida)). It was implemented by a consortium of organisations in Mozambique, including: COWI Moçambique Lda, Centro de Aprendizagem e Capacitação da Sociedade Civil (Centre for Learning and Capacity Building for Civil Society (CESC)), N'weti Comunicação para a Saúde, Kwantu, Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Save the Children, and Oxford Policy Management as well as local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) Facilidade, Watana, Associação Nacional para o Desenvolvimento Auto-Sustentado (National Association for Self-Sustaining Development (ANDA)), Associação de Apoio ao Desenvolvimento (Association for Development Support (NANA)), Nova Vida, Organização para o Desenvolvimento da Comunidade (Organization for Community Development (OCSIDA)), and Vukoxa in the provinces of Gaza, Manica, Nampula, and Zambézia over a five-year period from September 2012 to June 2017. CEP enabled citizens to engage in dialogue with service providers and provided tools for them to monitor provision of services. Specifically, CEP worked to raise the awareness of citizens, communities, and service providers on key issues: citizens' rights and duty-bearers' duties around education; active involvement of citizens in monitoring education services; and engagement of citizens with service providers to resolve problems that arise. The programme also supported Mozambican organisations and institutions to take

Box 1.1 CESC (Centre for Learning and Capacity Building for Civil Society)

CESC is a Mozambican civil society organisation (CSO) that works to develop the capacity and capabilities of other CSOs and to facilitate learning and advocacy on public policies, with a view to improving the quality of citizens' participation in the processes of governance. CESC is host to the Learning and Advocacy Hub in the Education Sector (Rede de Advocacia e Aprendizagem sobre Educação – RAA-Ed), which was created in the context of the CEP. School councils are one of the groups with which CESC works. It seeks to connect support for school councils with implementation of initiatives for communities to monitor and evaluate the quality of services. Through these initiatives – such as the community scorecard (CPC) and the Olavula Platform – citizens identify priority issues that need to be resolved to improve services, and which need to be included in school council action plans.

Also, due to the absence of mechanisms for escalating problems that go beyond a school's remit to a higher level of decision-making, CESC has: (i) supported the establishment of networks of school councils that advocate at district level; (ii) developed advocacy campaigns on priority issues that recur in feedback on CPCs; and (iii) actively participated in preparation and monitoring of the implementation of education policies and strategies.

matters that could not be solved by schools and channel them to higher levels of decision-making (local, district, provincial and national). An essential element of this work was collaboration with the mechanisms of co-management that exist in the education and health sectors.

In education, the CEP enabled citizen monitoring of services through the community scorecard (*Cartão de Pontuação Comunitária* (CPC)), focusing on the link between CPC action plans and the work plans of the co-management mechanism in schools – the school councils (*conselhos de escola*). This work identified a need to better understand the role of school councils as a link between the school and the community, and also in escalating important matters to higher levels of management in the education system, beyond that of school authorities. It was in this context that IDS and CESC (see Box 1.1), both members of the CEP consortium, proposed to undertake a qualitative study on representation and inclusion in school councils. This report presents the findings of that study and incorporates comments and reflections generated at two events: the International Event on Community Participation in School Management (Evento Internacional sobre Participação da Comunidade na Gestão Escolar), organised by CESC in May 2017; and CEP's International Closing Seminar held on 6–7 December 2017 in Maputo, during which the results of the study were presented and discussed.

The primary aim of this study was to widen the knowledge base available to civil society and to government on the factors that contribute to good performance by school councils in building inclusivity and social accountability to improve the quality of education services. The specific objectives were:

- to strengthen support for school councils by the Ministry of Education and Human Development (Ministério da Educação e Desenvolvimento Humano (MINEDH)) through recommendations, policies, rules, and processes of qualification;
- to provide CEP partners and other parties involved at the district, provincial, and national levels with significant and systematised information about the factors that contribute to stronger links between school councils and citizens at the local level, and between school councils and other parts of the education management system at different levels;
- to stimulate debate and exchange of experiences between civil society organisations (CSOs) that are involved in strengthening social accountability and improving the quality of education;
- to generate evidence on the influence of the CPC processes in the relationship between citizens, school councils, and education authorities so as to complement and deepen the results of other studies carried out in relation to the CEP.

1.2 Methodology

The methodology was structured to investigate inclusion, representation, and strategies for seeking support and solving problems within school councils. This was a qualitative study, combining primary and secondary data. Analysis of the

secondary data included review of (a) the legal basis, and (b) what is specified by public policies, in relation to school councils (summarised in Section 2).

The study was conducted by a team comprising: three researchers from IDS (Kátia Taela, Erika López Franco, and Alex Shankland); the CESC advocacy and learning officer (Nárcya Chilengue); a member of the CEP management team (Claudino Goodyfry); and an independent consultant (Catija Maivasse), who gave support with coordination of logistics and collection of data, transcription of recordings and coding. All members of the team contributed to the preparation of this report.

1.2.1 Review of the literature

The study included a review of the published and unpublished literature on school councils in Mozambique and internationally, with particular attention to literature in Portuguese, in Portuguese-speaking countries, and in sub-Saharan Africa. The aim was to obtain a general overview of the main themes explored, the methodologies and theoretical frameworks used, and any conclusions that we judge to be significant for the Mozambican context. The review of literature included a component of analysis of documents – i.e. of policies, strategies, decrees, and other regulatory instruments of the Mozambique national education system that are directly or indirectly related to school councils. This exercise is necessary to understand the status and position of school councils in the national education system, specifically their legal bases and what is specified in public policies. The analysis of documents also included documentation of programmes produced by public institutions, CSOs and cooperation partners, including evidence generated in the ambit of the CEP, so as to understand which actors work with the councils, and what activities they carry out.

1.2.2 Study sites

Primary data were collected in Monapo and Rapale districts (Nampula province), Sussundenga (Manica province), and Chokwè (Gaza province), which was also the location of the pilot phase of the study. The fieldwork was done in six public schools that cover the full range of ages defined by the term ‘primary’ in Mozambique (classes 1 to 7, with children aged 7 to 13) and are classified as type 1 schools on the numerical scale because they have more than 1,500 pupils registered.¹ As to geographical distribution, two schools were chosen in Gaza (Chokwè district), two in Nampula (one in Rapale district, the other in Monapo district), and a further two in Manica (both in Sussundenga district). Fieldwork was carried out in May and June 2017, at locations where CEP and CESC have activities. The research focused on the provincial and district levels, but important information was also collected at the central level during the two international events already referred to (the International Seminar organised by CESC in May 2017 and the CEP International Closing Seminar in December 2017).

¹ Type 2 schools have between 500 and 1,500 registered pupils; type 3 schools have less than 500.

1.2.3 Data collection methods

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews with key informants, and focus group discussions, the latter using participative techniques.

Semi-structured interviews were held with a range of key informants: (a) one with employees of the Provincial Directorate of Education and Human Development (DPEDH); (b) four with employees of the District Services for Education, Youth and Technology (SDEJT); (c) three with programme officers of the CSOs that implemented the CEP; and (d) six with school head teachers. There were also three focus group discussions with CEP facilitators who worked with schools, and four with members of school councils. In two schools, it was not possible to carry out focus groups with all the members of the school council, so we opted to hold interviews with smaller groups – with representatives of the teachers and technical/administrative staff, the pupils, the community, and parents and guardians. This strategy turned out to be very useful, because it enabled us to obtain more detailed information about how these representatives perceive their role, since more people spoke in smaller groups than in the larger focus groups. Due to the importance of the pupils' point of view in this study, and the need to create a safe space where they could speak freely, we also held six focus groups only with pupils.

We sought to use participative methods that would encourage all members of the group to participate, and which would capture participants' views on the subjects explored, rather than testing hypotheses that had been developed by the research team. This approach enabled us to learn about the challenges faced by members of school councils in the context in which they live. It was also possible to understand the logic behind processes – for example, how they select members – and behind the decisions taken. In the focus groups with school council members (adults and pupils), we first sought to explore who they were, how they had been chosen, which group(s) they represented, and which committee they were part of. We then asked which neighbourhoods they came from, using a visual technique in which we drew concentric circles centred on the school (the smallest representing the closest neighbourhoods) and asked participants to indicate which neighbourhoods they lived in. The third and last part of the exercise was dedicated to a mapping process in which participants identified the actors that had helped them or could help them in the future, their degree of influence and/or capacity to help, and their accessibility – i.e. whether the members of the school council knew how to reach them in order to present their problems.

For the focus groups with pupils who are not members of a school council, we sought a script which combined play (between the pupils and the session facilitator), drawing, and conversation. The play was used for us to present ourselves to the pupils and become familiarised with each other. The drawings were used to stimulate conversation – in particular, we asked the pupils to draw things that they like and things they do not like in their school; each then spoke to others in the group about what they had drawn. After all participants had presented their drawings, we moved onto a conversation in which each pupil could intervene whenever they liked, needing only to put up their hand. We used some of the things that the pupils did not like to stimulate conversation about how they went about solving problems. We wanted to see who they identified, particularly whether they mentioned the school council, and who were the best-known members, or

those that were closest to the pupils. This included observing whether pupils who were members of the school council were known as such, and whether the children that we talked to had taken part in their selection.

Finally, observation was crucial for capturing interactions between members of the school council, to map relationships of power and 'voice'. In schools that we visited more than once, we were also able to observe not only the presence of some members of the school council but also their involvement in other aspects of the school – for example, a school council chairperson and other women shelling beans in the school's vegetable plot. Due to the important role of observation in this study, we had a well-defined division of functions among the research teams (Kátia Taela and Nárcya Chilengue in Nampula, and Claudino Goodyfry and Erika López Franco, with the support of Catija Maivasse, in Manica): one person was responsible for observing and taking note of the interactions, and the other for facilitating the discussion. The fact that we had permission to record interviews (subject to the right to anonymity) made it possible for us to engage more fully with the focus group activity.

In the next section we give a brief contextualisation of the theme of the research, and the conceptual framework used. We then discuss the results of the study, the main conclusions, and some recommendations.

2 Contextualisation

2.1 International studies on school councils

Internationally, there is a wide range of literature on education that is relevant to this study, because it deals with themes such as decentralisation of education systems, participation of administrators and teachers in the education system (Bauch and Goldring 1998), and participation of the community (Bray 2003; Gordon and Louis 2009; Rose 2003; Yamada 2014). Two studies explore the link between the involvement of guardians/the broader community and student performance (Gordon and Louis 2009; Taniguchi and Hirakawa 2016). A few studies investigate the subject of building social accountability: for example, Suzuki (2002) analysed the relationship between participation of guardians and building of social accountability in primary schools in Uganda; Sasaoka and Nishimura (2010) analysed the relationship between participation and achieving social accountability in the context of universal primary education policies and decentralisation in East Africa; Pryor (2005) investigated whether community participation can mobilise social capital to improve schooling in rural areas of Ghana; and Rose (2003) analysed community participation in school policies and practices in Malawi.

The study by Suzuki (2002) on participation of parents and guardians in four primary schools in Uganda revealed that their perception of the schools' accountability influenced how they participated in education. Suzuki identified two main ways in which parents and guardians participate – by registering their child/children in school and by making financial contributions to the school – and argued that these actions were directly related to the notion of continuous

accountability in use. Suzuki's study identified, as the main forms of absence of accountability: lack of transparency in relation to the school's finances; unequal power relationships between parents and school heads; and distance between parents and the leaders of the co-management mechanism. Parents reacted to these factors by withdrawing their children from the school and/or transferring them to another school, or refusing to contribute financially when asked again. However, as the study demonstrated, these strategies had little or no impact on the school management and did not lead to the creation of any accountability mechanism.

Bray (2003) compared the objectives and dimensions of community initiatives in education and their connection with government programmes in various developing countries. Three important conclusions are worth highlighting. The first is that while in some situations communities, governments, and international agencies collaborate harmoniously, in others there is a dissonance between their interests, their motivations for collaborating, and their knowledge of each other. The second is that in the majority of countries, there is a lack of coherence between policies and the allocation of funds to enable communities to carry out the roles attributed to them, and this in turn causes an excess burden on the communities. The third relates to the mechanisms of co-management: specifically, Bray (2003) found that socio-cultural, economic, and racial differences affect the constitution of these bodies and help to maintain or reinforce prevailing racial, social and geographical disparities. Bray cited the investigations of Opolot (1994) in Uganda, where most of the members of parent-teacher associations (PTAs) came from better-off socioeconomic groups, which were not always interested in the priorities of less privileged groups; he also cited the work of Merchant (1999) in Pakistan, where communities were afraid of the PTA because it comprised local politicians.

Analysing perceptions on school education in the rural context in Ghana, Pryor (2005) argued that the school and the life of the community belonged to two distinct fields, each with their own logic, and that this causes a barrier to community participation. Pryor argued that the idea of 'community participation' tends to be based on notions that do not correspond to people's daily experience, because it assumes that people are interested in school education – i.e. that they perceive it as important, and are disposed to invest their resources (including time and money) in it. Pryor further revealed that the notion of 'community participation' is based on the assumption that there is a collective of individuals who identify themselves as such, when, in reality, in many cases the 'community' is in fact fragmented and people do not identify with each other, nor with the place where they live; he further indicates that in most cases 'community' is only a geographical category. Pryor concluded that efforts to promote community participation should first concentrate on the creation of a sense of community, and that the state should be more proactive in this, rather than hoping that a supposed homogeneous and harmonious 'community' will develop local schools.

In the same vein, Yamada (2014) argues that instead of taking the school management committees only as an administrative instrument – i.e. a way of promoting community participation and assessing the efficacy of that participation – there is a need to investigate people's motivation for committing themselves to school education, the factors that influence the levels and forms that participation

takes, and also the social dynamics that affect the construction and functioning of those mechanisms. Yamada studied whether and to what degree people's commitment to 14 schools in three districts of the Oromia region in Ethiopia had changed with the establishment of school management committees and whether there were other factors that influenced that commitment beyond these committees. The study indicated that people participated in school education even before school management committees existed, that their commitment was rooted in their own local life experience and its dynamics, and that people's involvement in schools mostly derived from experiences that were not directly related to education, such as management of water, land disputes, and access to social services.

In relation to the factors that influence people's commitment, Yamada (2014) highlights geographical proximity to the school and its location – noting, on this point, that parents often have difficulties in supporting a school that is distant from their home, even though their children attend the school, and underlining the need to take into account that parents with children who are studying in different schools are part of different school 'communities'. Another significant conclusion drawn by Yamada (2014) concerns leadership and the different types of leadership; the study found that the most active groups had leadership with charisma, vision, and capacity to mobilise people and resources outside the school and/or community. Particularly significant for this study is Yamada's classification on types of leadership, and the importance given to the capacity to relate to people external to the community in contexts of community participation depending on external help, particularly financing from bilateral and multilateral agencies.

Taniguchi and Hirakawa's (2016) study of a rural district of Malawi showed that the schools with the best pupil results had greater involvement of parents and the community than those that had less strong results. Parents and communities prioritised activities that contributed to improving the pupils' school results, in particular, recruiting voluntary teachers, extra classes, and mock exams to prepare pupils. The contribution made by community participation to the results achieved by pupils was indirect, because it was primarily focused on improving the school management, which in turn led to better results. The conclusions of their study, and those of Suzuki (2002), are particularly significant for the Mozambique context in that school councils appear to prioritise another type of activity – most frequently, improvement of school infrastructure and heightened awareness of parents and guardians on socio-cultural questions (see Section 5).

2.2 National policies and legislation

To make the School a base for the people to take power...
(Samora Machel, President of Mozambique, 1979)

The words of Mozambique's first President are usually cited when describing the efforts, first by the Mozambique Liberation Front (Frelimo) in the liberated zones during the war for independence, and later (post-independence) by the government and the Ministry of Education, to promote a stronger connection between communities (the people) and schools, supposedly inspired by the experience of the 'liberated zones' (Mazula 1995). In the post-independence period this was done initially through the parents' committees and school–community

link committees (Comissões de Pais e de Ligação Escola-Comunidade (CLEC)) and, more recently, through school councils. References to involvement of the community in school management can be found in various pieces of legislation and policy: (a) Law 4 of 23 March 1983, which created the National Education System (SNE); (b) Article 2 of Law 6/92, of 6 May 2003, which made adjustments to the SNE and underlined the need for a close link between the school and the community, and the community's role in orienting the school; (c) Ministerial Order 54 of 28 May 2003, which created school councils in the context of administrative decentralisation; (d) the General Regulations on Primary Teaching, of 2008; (e) the Strategic Education Plan 2012–2019; and also in the *Primary School Council Support Manual* of 2015.

The Strategic Education Plan (2012–2019) adopts participation of families and communities as part of its vision, constituting one of the sector's principal partnerships;² it also specifies the values of inclusion and equity (in access to schools and in retention of pupils), and good governance of the national education system among its principal priorities. The document states that the community has the opportunity to participate in school management through school councils (MINEDH 2012: 18). The foreword to the *Primary School Council Support Manual* indicates that 'the school is part of the property of the community' (MINEDH 2015b: 5), and that the creation and strengthening of school councils aims to make school management 'more inclusive, transparent and effective'. The school council is described as an executive body, alongside the school management; it is expected that committees and/or associations of parents, or school–community link committees, will support the functioning of school councils (MEC 2008: 14).

2.2.1 National guidelines on school councils

The *Primary School Council Support Manual* sets out the steps and procedures for constituting school councils, under the responsibility of the head teacher, who must first, 'in coordination with the competent local authorities, publicly announce the day, time and place of the constitution of the School Council' (MINEDH 2015b: 10), using all the channels/media/means available, including public and/or private community radio, local newspapers, religious communities, community leaders, pamphlets, community lectures and meetings, and other means (*ibid.*: 10). The manual further indicates that an announcement on the constitution of the school council must contain information on why the participation of all is necessary – i.e. for the purpose of choosing those who will represent them on this body.

The next steps can be summed up as four stages: (a) a meeting to constitute the council, where participants should be informed about the objectives and

2 The other two partnerships are: the involvement of civil society and the private sector, and dialogue with international partners. The Strategic Plan recognises a growing role for civil society and private sector organisations. In relation to civil society, it highlights the contribution of the Education for All Movement (Movimento de Educação para Todos (MEPT)) in the processes of planning and monitoring of the sector's policies, and the role of local organisations in the provision of education. It emphasises the role of the private sector as a provider of post-primary teaching, and also its role in partnership with economic agents under corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, which has translated into building of schools, provision of equipment, offer of study grants, and similar actions (MINEDH 2012: 19).

importance of the school council, its composition, and the conditions for being a member; (b) the formation of an oversight committee to direct the process of voting and ascertaining results, with three members (chair, secretary and board member), based on candidacies by interested parties;³ (c) the committee must explain to those present the objectives, importance, and modes of voting of the representatives of each group (secret or open); and (d) the committee proceeds to the actual election and counting of the results. Seven days after the election, the meeting constituting the school council is held (chaired by the director of the school) and the chair is elected, by secret vote. The chair must be a representative either of parents and guardians or of the community. The election is followed by a public swearing-in ceremony, directed by the school head.

In relation to the frequency of meetings, the manual sets a requirement of three meetings per year, but members of the school council, especially the committees, may meet more frequently as needed.

The process of renewal of membership (referred to in Portuguese as *revitalização* – literally ‘revitalisation’) is part of a wider initiative by MINEDH to improve the management of public finances, particularly of the fund called Direct Support for Schools (Apoio Directo às Escolas (ADE)). It is stated that the existence of the school council is essential to ensure:

... participative and transparent management, successful school results, good performance by teachers, and participative involvement of parents and/or guardians in monitoring the performance of their children/pupils and continuous evaluation of the school.

(MINEDH 2015a: 7)

In addition, school councils are expected to ‘adjust the guidelines and targets that are established at central and local level to the reality of the school and the community’ (*ibid.*).

2.2.2 Direct support for schools

The members of the school council that are directly involved in the management of the ADE fund are the school head, the chair, the secretary and the members of the committee for finance, property, production and safety. Primary responsibility for the fund lies with the school head, but the school council has the function of checking and approving the list of purchases and the processes of rendering of accounts. Over time, MINEDH has introduced various changes in fund management to improve its transparency – the most recent being the prohibition on teachers being chairs of school councils because, as members of the purchasing committee, in schools that do not have bank accounts, they can collect the cheques for disbursements from the ADE.

3 This committee should meet separately with each one of the groups (parents and/or guardians, community, teachers, and the school’s technical/administrative staff) and prepare for the election of their representatives, ensuring that the conditions for the election are present – i.e. that only people belonging to the group are present; that there is a quorum for the election (at least three times the number of seats to be elected); and that the ballot boxes are available.

The tasks of the school council's finance, property, production and safety committee include: participating in the planning of the school's expenses; arranging for raising of funds through partnerships and contributions from the community; checking execution of the school's budget, including the state budget (Orçamento de Estado (OE)), the ADE, and the fund of local contributions; encouraging and stimulating production from school vegetable gardens; and controlling records of the revenue/profits from such production.

An important support instrument is the *Manual of Procedures for the Direct Support for Schools Fund*, produced by MINEDH. According to this manual, the purchasing committee is 'responsible for preparing the list of purchases, their approval by the school council, and acquisition of the materials and services contained in the list of purchases approved, in accordance with the rules for acquisition'; and the inbound goods reception committee is 'responsible for reception and checking of materials acquired, and for the use of the materials in accordance with the agreed purpose' (MINEDH 2015a: 13). The committees must comprise at least three members, of which one must be a representative of the community. In relation to the school head teacher's participation, the document stipulates that a representative of the technical/administrative staff must be part of the purchasing committee and that the school head must be part of the goods inward reception committee. The formation of the committees must be approved by the school council, and formalised in minutes signed by the chairperson and the school head teacher.

The first objective of the ADE is to improve teaching and learning conditions by making funds available to the schools for acquisition of various materials and services, focusing on teaching materials for the pupil and for the school. The second objective of the ADE is to reinforce school management through a greater involvement of the community and of School Councils in the application of the school's funds.
(MINEDH 2015a: 1)

In spite of this statement, there is nothing defined about the involvement of the other members of the school community, other than the obligatory duty to publish information about the ADE, that is to say: 'the school must post a copy of all the significant available information about the ADE in windows, in the teachers' room, in the library, and/or in other locations, depending on the conditions of the school' (MINEDH 2015a: 13). The document specifies this 'significant information' as including: the amounts received and receivable; the list of materials and services eligible; the list of the school's purchases; the minutes of the meeting (of the school council) that appointed and set up the committees; the approval of the list of purchases; the note recording delivery of the materials by the purchasing committee to the goods inward reception committee; and tables giving account of the application of the funds. It is also expected that schools should make the *Manual of Procedures for the Direct Support for Schools Fund* available for public consultation (*ibid.*).

School councils are responsible for promoting the schooling of girls, and for gender equality. The *Primary School Council Support Manual* contains specific instruction that 'gender equality must be ensured' in the school council (MINEDH 2015b: 8), that the working committees must 'always seek the maximum gender balance' (*ibid.*: 24), and that the social affairs committee 'must, mandatorily, have

Box 2.1 Actions taken and planned by MINEDH in 2017 to strengthen school councils

- Revision of the *Primary School Council Support Manual*
- Production and distribution of the revised *Primary School Council Support Manual*
- 8 March set as annual election date for school councils
- Launch of campaign on school councils
- School Council Support Kit produced and distributed
- Posters about school councils produced and distributed
- Advertising spot on school councils produced and aired on TV/radio
- Technical staff trained for province management units, SDEJT and school heads
- Monitoring of functioning of school councils

Actions in progress

- Training/qualification of members of school councils
- Creation of a brand logotype for school councils
- Production of advertising material about school councils
- Community radio campaign on the importance of school councils

Source: Guibunda (2017)

one female member of the School Council, from the group representing either the parents/guardians, or the community' (*ibid.*: 27). The greater part of the tasks in schooling of girls is to be carried out by the social affairs committee, but the teaching subjects committee must analyse and state an opinion on 'the data on pupils dropping out of school, especially girls and pupils that are orphans, vulnerable or have special needs' (*ibid.*).

The social affairs committee has a remit of general responsibilities: promotion of health (school health, sexual and reproductive health, and in particular prevention of HIV); water and sewerage services; hygiene; identification of and support for orphaned and vulnerable children; and prevention of pupils dropping out of school. Within these areas it has specific tasks such as: activities to promote gender equality; preventing early marriage and pregnancy; and creation of conditions to support girls with special educative needs 'in cases of acts of discrimination, or physical or sexual violence, whether concealed or declared' (MINEDH 2015b: 26–27).

2.2.3 MINEDH's interventions to strengthen school councils

The production of the *Primary School Council Support Manual* is part of a group of initiatives to 'increasingly improve the involvement of the School Councils in rendering of accounts and in obedience to educational standards and rules' (*idem*). The document explicitly associates good governance with improvement of the quality of the education services offered, and states that the school council is the body that should guarantee good governance in the schools. It also says:

... active and constructive participation by the community, and by parents and/or guardians, through school councils, in the taking of decisions can improve a school's infrastructure, equipment and environment and promote school success, since its involvement is positively linked to the pupils' results. Parents can support the school in the organization of a group of activities the purpose of which is to improve school performance and development...

(MINEDH 2015b: 6)

Box 2.1 shows some of the actions developed and planned by MINEDH to strengthen school councils.

2.3 Studies on school councils in Mozambique

The greater part of the literature on school councils in Mozambique has not been published; a considerable part of it was produced in the context of actions taken to strengthen school management, and to improve access to and the quality of teaching, and/or to document how specific and/or cross-sectional questions were or will be treated. This material includes basic studies, work plans and reports of activities and research (IBIS 2014; GIZ 2016). Another part of this material was produced for master's degree or doctorate studies, most of them dealing with questions of school management and leadership (Armando 2006; Basílio 2014; Manhique 2015), including democratic management (Nhanice 2013; Marcelino and Machado 2015) and (in much lesser quantity) community participation (Ibraimo and Machado 2014).

In the schools studied by Ibraimo and Machado (2014), in spite of there being a good relationship between the members of the council and between them and the school, and in spite of the school head encouraging the presence of the members of the school council in meetings, those members were found to have little influence in decision-making processes, since discussions were oriented by, and decisions were taken by, the school head. On the same lines, as part of a study on the role of the school council in the organisation and direction of a school, Basílio (2014) analyses to what extent the orientations given by the head of the school chosen for a case study (Completa de Beleza primary school) were helpful to participation.

The emphasis on the role of school heads in the functioning of the school council and on the barriers to participation created by the managers of school institutions tends to overlook the struggles for greater autonomy and practices of contestation adopted by members of school councils and by the community in general. There is a tendency for a school council to be treated as a homogeneous entity, distinguishing only the chair from other members. As a result, there is little knowledge about the individuals that comprise these mechanisms (by contrast to the present almost exclusive emphasis on the collective). On this, the work of Basílio (2014) makes a valuable contribution because it discusses the role of the school council according to the various groups that it represents – teachers, pupils, parents and guardians, and members of the community. However, it says little about the profile of the representatives of each of these groups, particularly as regards the distinction between the representatives of parents/guardians and of members of the community, and almost nothing about the link between the latter and the

wider community, beyond its analysis on the profile of the chairperson of the school council/neighbourhood secretary, who had been in the position for nine years.

It is, though, of central importance to look at the profiles and histories of the members of a school council, and their action and agency, to understand the potential of school councils as democratic and inclusive spaces for community participation, enabling us to explore more deeply the relationships, which have still been very little researched, between school councils and the communities/citizens they supposedly represent. As well as evaluating their performance, as explored by Basílio (2014), the need for a deeper analysis on who should be members of School Councils underlined in the literature on renewal (*revitalization*) and capacity building of school councils further suggests the importance of studying who is, or has in the past been, part of the School Council.

The programme and academic literature both largely concentrate on the functioning of school councils, but the programme literature tends to emphasise actions for 'revitalization and capacity building' of school councils, while the academic literature tends to pay more attention to interactions and perceptions of the actors involved, especially members of school councils. This present study was designed to complement the existing national and international literature, looking above all at the questions of representation, inclusion, and strategies for seeking support and solution of problems. In the subsequent section we continue with the review of the significant literature, but concentrate on those studies that informed the collection and analysis of the primary data – i.e. those that informed our conceptual framework.

3 The conceptual framework: inclusion, representation, and mediation

There is a vast literature on political *representation*. It includes a large number of studies inspired by the classic work, *The Concept of Representation*, by Hannah Fenichel Pitkin (1967). Pitkin defines political representation as 'acting substantively for others', and in democratic societies the majority of authors tend to attribute this role exclusively to actors who are part of the specifically political sphere. In recent years, however, an increasingly large number of studies have examined the representative role exercised by other actors, the origins of which are outside the party political sphere. This study is located in that category, because its focus is on the role of representation in school councils, whose function (according to the legislation) is to represent the population in decisions, and in oversight of activities – that is to say, to act substantively for others, but not through party political elections.

Starting in the 1990s, with the global trend characterised by Judith Tendler (1997) as 'decentralization and participation', there has been a proliferation of spaces where citizens are invited to participate in decisions side-by-side with employees of the state. Some authors call these positions 'invited spaces' (Gaventa 2006). School councils are a typical example of this type of space, because they are established formally by a government policy, and are required to bring together

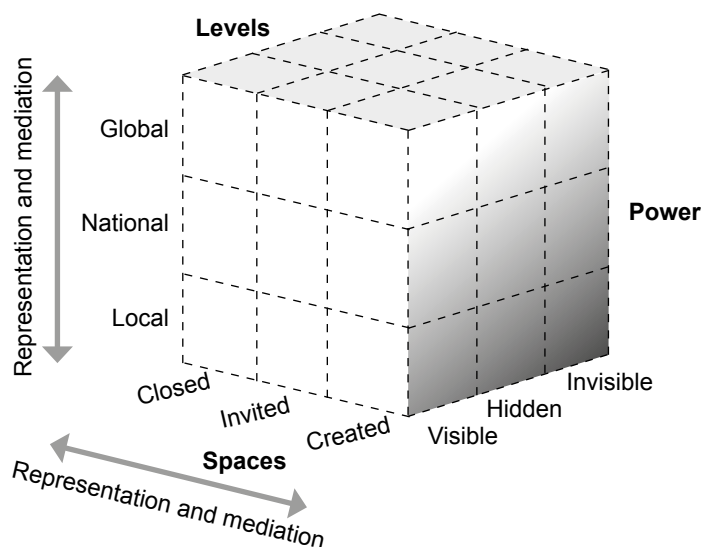
professionals (teachers), managers (the head of the school), pupils, parents and guardians, and the wider community. In school councils, as in other 'invited spaces', only a small number of people can participate in practice, so each one of these major categories of participants is represented by a small number of individuals.

In many countries, the role of representing the community in 'invited spaces' has been assumed by civil society actors. A series of studies by Peter Houtzager, Adrián Gurza Lavalle and colleagues in Brazil, Mexico, and India has analysed this phenomenon of 'representation by civil society'. They identified various justifications that these actors used to defend their right to represent others: in some cases because they were chosen by a meeting or assembly; in others because they have the same social identity as the population represented; in others still, because they have a great knowledge of the local reality (Houtzager and Gurza Lavalle 2009). These studies have attracted attention for the importance of analysing the legitimacy of those who present themselves to speak in the name of others, even without having gone through a formal process of election, as is the case in party politics.

However, these studies were focused on what in Brazil is usually called 'organized civil society' – that is, formal associations or NGOs. In recent years, attention has increasingly been turned to 'non-organized civil society' – which is made up of informal groups and associations, traditional or otherwise, and by networks of individuals who in African societies are the most important basis of social organisation (Fowler 2014). Some recent studies have sought to identify how the role of representation can also be exercised through this 'non-organized civil society'. The book *Mediated Citizenship: The Informal Politics of Speaking for Citizens in the Global South* (von Lieres and Piper 2014) presents various case studies which include this type of political representation, which the authors call 'informal mediation between the citizen and the state'. In its analysis, it calls attention to the need to find out whether this mediation has a merely 'diplomatic' function (that is, only of carrying messages to and fro between the citizens and the state) or whether it is more 'educative' (helping both sides to achieve a better understanding of the points of view of the other) – or whether the mediation is to be 'captured' to serve the interests of the mediator more than the interests of the citizens and/or the state.

The essential characteristic of the mediator in this type of process is that he or she navigates between different spaces, because he or she seeks opinions and experiences in the spaces of the community (which Gaventa names 'created spaces') and subsequently communicates them in the 'invited space'. Sometimes she or he can gain the confidence of state actors up to the point of being called to participate in meetings in the 'closed spaces' where many decisions are taken, usually far from the eyes of the community. The risk of this is that the mediator becomes increasingly identified with the state, to the point of representing the state to the community, and not vice versa.

Some mediators navigate between spaces which are located at different levels: for example, a community representative can participate in a meeting organised by a group of mothers in a village or settlement, and then take these mothers' concern to the meeting of the council of a school located in a district administrative office, and then subsequently be invited to participate in a meeting with the

Figure 3.1 The power cube

Source: Power cube image from Alex Shankland (teaching material), adapted from Gaventa (2006).

person responsible for the SDEJT at district headquarters, and then take part in the provincial-level meeting and the National Meeting of School Councils, and may even receive an invitation to travel to another country to participate in the International Meeting. Thus, one sees that representation and mediation are processes that involve taking messages back and forth between spaces, and that these spaces may be located at the same level but be of different types ('created', 'invited', or 'closed'), or may be located on different levels (from the local to the global). Often, political or practical barriers prevent community representatives passing, with their messages, from one level to the other; in those cases, mediation begins to depend on the representatives of the state, who can use channels that belong to the state itself, or to another mechanism, such as a political party, as we will see in Section 5 of this report.

Figure 3.1 illustrates how these processes of representation and mediation between spaces and levels work, in accordance with the power cube devised by Gaventa (2006).

Considering this conceptualisation of representation and mediation as 'taking messages back and forth between different spaces and levels', the origin of these messages emerges as a fundamental question: whose perceptions, demands, or priorities do they represent? This is what makes it so important to analyse *inclusion* in the processes of representation and mediation. Not all groups or individuals have access to these spaces. The 'closed spaces' are, by definition, exclusionary, because they include only persons linked to the most influential actors (the state, the world of business, or even of traditional authority). The 'invited spaces' are more open, but can function in places that are distant from where people live, or have an exclusionary rule about who may participate (e.g. related to party membership or level of education). Even the 'created spaces' organised by the community can exclude some people – above all, when they are organised around criteria of gender, age, or family relationship.

Even if a given group of people have access to a space, there are various different forms of power that can operate to exclude their opinions or silence their voices. In communities, rules of patriarchal power may prevent women from having a voice in decisions. In 'invited spaces', the use of technical language (or simply of the official national language, in zones where most people express themselves only in the local language) can function to intimidate people with lower levels of schooling. These forms of 'invisible power' can strengthen inequalities resulting from formal rules ('visible power') and influence networks ('hidden power') and even more emphatically exclude poorer and marginalised people.

To analyse the role of school councils, then, one must be attentive to the dimensions not only of representation and mediation, but also of *inclusion*. The functions of *representation* and *mediation* determine the quality of the connections between the school council and other spaces, whether at the level of the community – in the choice of the representatives and in the quest for perceptions and priorities – or at other levels of governance, in the quest for solutions to problems that cannot be solved locally. *Inclusion* determines *which* perceptions and priorities are incorporated into the processes of representation, and which are left out of the agenda of the decisions of the council and the list of issues to be taken to other levels. The 'invited spaces' frequently fail, either because they are not efficacious for solving the problems or because they are not seen as legitimate by segments of the population. The stronger the representation, the greater the efficacy of a school council; and the more inclusive it is, the greater its legitimacy.

We concluded that this conceptual framework is appropriate for this study because we consider school councils to be an 'invited space' – at the local level, in which various forms of power operate, which influence multiple factors: its composition; the members' type of participation/involvement; which voices are heard; and the type of link between members of the council and the groups they represent. Hence it is in the light of this operational framework that we present and analyse the main results of this study.

In the next section, we concentrate on the theme of *inclusion*. Section 5 describes and analyses how representation within the school–community relationship takes place. Section 6 looks at representation within the strategies school councils use to seek support and solutions to problems. Section 7 discusses the importance of capacity building and of access to information, and the contribution of the CEP to the strengthening of (a) representation, with greater inclusiveness, in school councils; and (b) the processes of finding solutions to problems.

4 Analysis of findings: (1) inclusion

One of the principles behind the creation of school councils was to make school management more inclusive. For this, it is necessary that school councils themselves are inclusive, and adopt strategies that encourage the participation of people who otherwise would remain at the margins of the school and of its management. In this section we discuss to what extent school councils are an inclusive body that involves representatives of various groups and hears their voice. The analysis concentrates on questions of geographical proximity in relation to the school, as well as gender, age, and disability.

4.1 Geographical proximity to the school

The inclusion and exclusion of people in the school council starts in its process of creation, when we say that the role of constituting the school council is a role for the school head – that he calls upon the people who are around him.

(SDEJT technical staff member, Sussundenga, Manica)

The school councils that we visited all had a majority of members living in the immediate neighbourhood in which the school was located. Neighbourhoods that were most distant from the school, even when they had pupils attending the school, tended to have fewer representatives or none. For example, in a school council of 22 members, approximately 15 lived in the school's own neighbourhood, the other seven coming from four other local neighbourhoods. The explanation given for this disparity was that most of the pupils of the school (EPC2) were children in the first- to fifth-year classes and came from the local neighbourhood itself. Only a minority, usually in the sixth and seventh years, came from other neighbourhoods because those neighbourhoods only had schools serving up to fifth-year class.⁴ This disparity is perceived to be something positive by the people that we interviewed, who argued that this facilitates communication, holding of meetings, and problem-solving.

All the members – no one is left out – when something comes up inside the school council, it's easy for us to meet urgently and deal with whatever has happened in the school.

(School council member (male), Rapale, Nampula)

[The School Council] is to be congratulated because at the end of the day the school is in the [name of neighbourhood] surrounded by this same neighbourhood, and the greater part of the members do indeed come from this same neighbourhood.

(Head teacher, Rapale, Nampula)

According to study participants, the geographical distribution of members also depends on the interest shown by people in participating in the school's meetings. In one of the focus groups, which revealed that one of the neighbourhoods covered by the school was not represented, this was attributed to the absence of any residents of that neighbourhood in meetings called by the school. '[Name of neighbourhood] does not want to participate, when there is a meeting here it doesn't want to participate and that's why it was not chosen' (School council member, Monapo, Nampula). However, when we asked how they could be so certain that the reason for that neighbourhood's absence was lack of interest, the focus group participants said that it could be because they are 'far away' – i.e. due to the distance between the school and their homes – and they recognised that representation on the school council depended largely on participation in the meeting in which the election had been held.

4 It was not possible to obtain exact data on the origins of the pupils so as to triangulate from the information obtained through the focus group.

Then, when the neighbourhood was not represented on that day, consequently they won't have a member in the school council, and as it happens that's what happened with [name of neighbourhood]. On the day of election of members of the school council, [name of neighbourhood] had no parent represented, and consequently has no school council member.

(School council member, Monapo, Nampula)

As well as the issue of distance, it was said that meetings at the start of the school year (at which school council members are elected) usually happened on the same day for various schools, which means that parents and guardians who have children in different schools have to choose which school meeting to attend, and for practical reasons tend to opt for the school that is closest and therefore most convenient. The fact that pupils from distant neighbourhoods, who are in the sixth- and seventh-year classes, are older than their siblings means that responsibility for participating (hearing and speaking) in their school meetings falls on them. As a school council member in Monapo, Nampula, said: 'The parents prefer to accompany the younger children, rather than the older ones.'

The weak or even non-existent representation of neighbourhoods that are furthest from the school in the school council has implications for the links between the school and residents of those neighbourhoods. Members of school councils that we spoke to said they sought to create this link through participation of the leaders of the neighbourhoods, who are always invited, and when present have responsibility for disseminating the decisions taken in school to residents in their neighbourhoods; another method is through mechanisms used by teachers to invite/call parents and guardians of pupils to meetings using 'little notes' – letters that pupils take home. In some cases, the school council itself sends invitations to parents/guardians via pupils. Regardless of who is issuing the invitation, of course, there is no guarantee that pupils will deliver it. Also, as noted earlier, sometimes parents and guardians are called to meetings but the objectives of the meeting are not explained to them, inhibiting their ability to take informed decisions.

We held discussions with the focus groups on the criteria for choice of pupils and to what extent, or whether, they could choose pupils from the more distant neighbourhoods to be members of the school council since, in principle, they do come to the school every day to study (unlike the parents and guardians). From what we could ascertain, the pupils represented in the school council are usually from the sixth- and seventh-year classes. Similarly, since the school council body includes community leaders, leaders of those neighbourhoods could also have been chosen. This strategy would ensure representation of all the neighbourhoods covered by the school – at least by pupils and/or leaders – in the event of parents and/or guardians not being available. The main challenge is that people have a tendency to choose people they know; and the people from the closest neighbourhoods tend to be better known than those from more distant neighbourhoods, as the following comment indicates:

It was not the community that elected the pupils, it was the pupils that elected each other – I don't know why one of the pupils didn't elect someone from [name of neighbourhood distant from the school]; the election of the pupils was all done by just the pupils themselves.

(School council member, Monapo, Nampula)

4.2 Participation of women: gender relations

In this section we look at various factors – the composition of the school council, the subjects it deals with, tasks, and participation practices – from a gender perspective. As already noted, the *Primary School Council Support Manual* insists that councils must have guaranteed gender equality. Although the document gives no significant orientation about how gender equality can be ensured, the examples given (in text and recordings) – which do not specify the counting methods used – include men and women, though in every case there are more men than women. The presence of women in fact varies from council to council. In our fieldwork we found two school councils chaired by women – one in Chokwè, chaired by an elderly woman (aged approximately 60) and another in Monapo, chaired by an adult woman (35–40); we found women as representatives of parents and guardians, of teachers, of technical/administrative staff, of the pupils, and of the community (although most community representatives were men). Two of the schools visited had female head teachers.

During the interviews and focus groups, we heard that subjects relating to children's education are primarily the responsibility of women, and that it is usually women who participate in the meetings; for this reason, we expected to see more women than men as representatives of parents and/or guardians. But this was not the case: in most of the focus groups there were more men than women. We also found that although there were some men who stayed silent during the greater part of the focus group discussion, usually the men who were representing the various groups talked more than the women. As an illustration: although the chair of one of the school councils in Chokwè is a woman, three other people – the school head, one teacher, and one representative of parents and guardians – were much more vocal during the discussion than she was, and on several occasions the head teacher interrupted her.

We did not note any major differences between the involvement of boys and girls in the focus group discussions. We judged that separate conversations with the pupils who were members of the focus group would have enabled us to explore this question in more depth. We return to the question of pupil participation in Section 4.3.

In the school council in Monapo, Nampula, the female chair was very active in the discussion, to the point that we had to ask her to allow her colleagues to speak too, instead of trying to explain things for them. We judged that her engagement and enthusiasm were related to various factors: the fact that she had joined the school council as a parent/guardian representative five years before becoming its chair; the fact that she was a facilitator of Watana, an implementer of the CEP; and that she had worked in various education projects in her district. Further, she was part of an informal education network, created by Facilidade, a Mozambican NGO based in Nampula, which was also an implementation partner of the CEP. When we asked her how she had felt on being voted chair, she spoke about her concern at the prospect of leading older men: 'This thing of me being a woman... will the members really listen to me? Surely I won't be capable – imagine being a woman in front of men, even older than I' – but later she thought about the capacity building that she had had in the previous year on the subject of feminine

leadership, and became more encouraged. She had already benefited from various courses or phases of capacity building on citizens' rights and duties; she had experience of work in and with the community, especially in mobilisation and consciousness-raising (as a facilitator of Watana supporting the CEP); and she was linked to various actors and collectives (such as the education network) which gave her important social capital. Her life history showed, also, the difference that capacity building and being connected to others can make. We will return to these themes when we discuss access to capacity building.

According to the interviews and focus groups, for solutions to issues such as girls dropping out of school, and school health, members of the social affairs committee sought collaboration from local leaders (most of them men) because they believed it to be the men who had the most influence on families, as this comment shows:

On the question of premature marriage – the parents support these marriages of children. The school is unable to resolve the issue; it has to be the structure of the neighbourhood.

(School council member (teacher), Chokwè, Gaza)

It was not possible to explore further how this work is carried out or to what extent the socio-cultural values and informal rules that contribute to early marriages and pregnancies are shared, challenged and/or reinforced by members of school councils, because that was beyond the scope of this study. However, SDEJT technical staff members who work in the area of gender and school health, who were interviewed in Chokwè and Rapale, indicated that the school councils have received capacity building on gender equality and discrimination against girls as part of projects implemented by various national and international NGOs, and that the schools have gender discussion units. In Chokwè, the SDEJT technical staff member (female) told us that: 'All the schools have gender centres to reduce cases of early pregnancy, and anonymous reporting boxes for cases of abuse that may happen in the school and in the community, but we have not yet had any cases of abuse reported through the school councils.' Indeed, various attempts at mediation and informal resolution of problems were mentioned in the focus groups with school council members, but no formal report or accusation had been made about such events.

4.3 Age

The *Primary School Council Support Manual* states that the school council must include pupils, and indeed there were pupils in all the school council meetings that we attended. However, the interactions that we saw during the focus group discussions indicate a need to think more deeply about how best to involve pupils, to ensure that they can make an effective contribution and influence both the work of the school council and the school itself. Part of this analysis will require attention to how to amplify the voice of pupils, in a context – such as Mozambique – where age is a structuring element of power and hierarchy relationships. Most of the pupils with whom we interacted stayed silent during the focus group discussions; when we asked them a direct question they did not answer without first looking at the adults present, especially the head teachers and teachers, and even after receiving permission from them to speak, they said little.

The pupils seemed not to be very familiar with the functioning and activities of the school councils they belonged to. They did not participate directly in the process of capacity building in any of the school councils that we visited; one school head in Rapale said: 'Sometimes the school councils receive capacity building, during lesson times, and the children don't take part because we can't take them out of class and interrupt lessons.' Also, the content of the capacity building subjects tends to neglect the way in which age affects the interactions between members of the school council, and between those members and others. The contents were directed to adults only.

4.4 Disabilities

The documents that orient school councils indicate the need to ensure that male and female pupils with special educational needs have access to social support, and protection against abuse and discrimination; it also guides them to 'analyse and make a statement on' the data on attendance, punctuality, and pupils dropping out. One of the six principles of the school council is 'to promote access for children and their retention in schools, especially girls, orphans and vulnerable children, and those with special educational needs' (MINEDH 2015b: 9).

After we worked in one of the schools in Rapale, we decided to visit the area around the school and talk to some residents to find out whether they knew about the school council. This visit was very revealing about the dynamics between the school councils, the communities surrounding schools, and the challenges of achieving inclusive education, in a context of extreme privation and scarcity such as that facing most of the schools in Mozambique. In the very first house that we stopped at, we found a young mother with two children, one still in arms and the other pre-adolescent, both her own daughters. The mother told us that the pre-adolescent girl had a hearing deficiency since birth. We asked whether the girl studied, and she said that at present no, but in the past they had made some attempts for her to attend lessons; this was not successful because she was not able to follow the subjects or interact with her colleagues who 'made fun of her'. The woman only knew the head teacher of the school, and some teachers; she knew nothing about the school council.

We noted that achieving access and retention of children with special educational needs is far beyond the existing capacities of the schools and the school councils. The head teachers of the schools we visited told us of the difficulties they face in supporting disabled children, due to lack of capacity building and appropriate material.

5 Analysis of findings:

(2) representation in the school–community relationship

In this section we discuss to what extent the school councils represent the voice of the community, or of the school in the community. For this, we analyse the following aspects: the process of electing members of school councils; the composition of school councils; members' profiles; members' perceptions on the reasons why they were chosen; their motivation to join the school council; the link between members of the school council and the group they represent; and transparency and the process of accountability.

5.1 The process of electing school council members

In spite of the clear orientation supplied by the *Primary School Council Support Manual*, our interviews and focus groups showed that the dissemination of information on the process of constituting the school council was very limited. The principal channels/media used by head teachers are community leaders and, in some cases, religious faiths. In all of the schools we visited, no one spoke to us about the use of community radio, or local newspapers or wall newspapers. Usually, the people who participate in the process of election are people close to the school and/or to head teachers or community leaders. We also found that there are variations in the way that the election process takes place. For example, in a school in Rapale, the election took place during a school assembly. During one focus group discussion, members of the school council said they did not know that the council was to be re-elected on that date, because they had been invited only to take part in a meeting at the school without any details about its purpose. In this school, the members of the previous council were presented to the parents for them to indicate who should leave or remain on the school council. Then, new members were elected by secret vote – those present wrote the names of the people they thought should be members on pieces of paper and deposited them in a ballot box. In Chokwè, we were told of a different process: first, there was a meeting in the neighbourhood, in which a pre-selection of the representatives of the community was made; then there was a subsequent meeting at the school, as this statement indicates:

The head of the neighbourhood is the person who lets it be known in the district that the school wants people in the neighbourhood to be part of the school council. Then, out there in the neighbourhood, they set a meeting, and at the meeting they nominate this guy, that guy, the other guy. On day X they go to the school, there is a meeting there at the school, and the people come to this meeting. So, when they arrive here at the school it's here that the people that they need to be part of this council are voted. The people of the community are voted the same way, through writing on slips of paper, this is what has happened also in the school; we are voted in the community while we are many, and then while we are many we come to the school where another vote is taken using slips of paper, written, to be counted. The voting

is secret – and the voting for the pupils is the same thing, secret. The children also come as a group of many, and then those that are intended are selected.
(School council chair (male), Chokwè, Gaza)

Head teachers and other members of the school councils stated that ‘the community was present’, or ‘the community chose’, and that ‘the community knows the members of the school council’. Although some members said they had been ‘elected by the community’, the explanation they gave indicated that they were referring to the local authorities – i.e. they had been chosen by local leaders ‘in the presence of the population’ (the few residents who had participated) in the event, as this comment also suggests:

In some situations the person that nominates the members of the school council is the leader [indicated by the structure of the government], which means that what you have is a party-political school council.
(ANDA/CEP facilitator, Sussundenga, Manica)

Further, the idea that the community knows the members of the school council is questionable. Although the majority of the members are people who are known, particularly in the neighbourhoods immediately surrounding the school, most often, residents do not know that these people are members of the school council or what being a member means. In Rapale, we found that several residents of houses close to the school did not know what the school council was, or who its members were.

In relation to the election of pupils, various different and confusing procedures were reported to us, with differences between how head teachers and pupils described the process; however, it was clear that the teachers and supervising class-year teachers had an important role in it. Usually the pupils chosen are from the fourth-, fifth-, sixth- and seventh-year classes (above all, the latter), because it is assumed that those who are older have more capacity to carry out the function.

We select the pupils between the classes, but we exclude first and second, we take them starting from the fourth year, through an indication – it is the teachers of each year that make the choice of the pupils based on the child’s participation.
(Head teacher, Sussundenga, Manica)

It was the head teacher who put forward [pupil’s] name as a member of the school council.
(School council member (pupil), Sussundenga, Manica)

In one school, in Rapale, we were told that a pre-selection is made from the pupils in each year, in a process facilitated by the supervising class-year teacher; these pupils were then presented during the meeting with the community. In Monapo and Sussundenga, however, different processes were described, as these statements indicate:

I came here to the school and I found a group of pupils [12] all together in one place [under a cashew tree], and I asked: ‘what are you doing?’ They said: ‘We want to choose who will represent us on the school council.’ I said ‘really?’ Then the teacher [female] asked who would vote for [girl’s name], and said that a person could not vote for herself, each person has to write the name

of someone else. After that they voted, then and there, and each person had their vote, the teacher began to collect those votes.

(School council member (pupil), Monapo, Nampula)

We were at the graduation ceremony. The teachers separated out the pupils of the seventh, sixth and fifth class years. They chose some pupils and asked whether they could be members of the council or not, and if they could represent us – and we answered yes.

(School council member (pupil), Sussundenga, Manica)

According to the reports above, it was during the daily school meeting⁵ that the teachers told the pupils they should choose colleagues to represent them in the school council. It was not clear from the report by the girl pupil of the school in Monapo why only 12 pupils had organised themselves to choose their representatives in a school of some 1,400 pupils, nor had there been a process of consultation with the other pupils. During the focus group discussion with pupils of this school, the pupils said they had been present on the day when the head teacher and teachers told the pupils they needed to choose colleagues to be members of the school council, but they could not describe how the selection of the colleagues had taken place. When we asked whether they would like to be members of the school council, some said yes, even though they did not really know what their colleagues do, nor did they know the requirements for being a member. Even so, all of them knew the chair (female) and the pupils that are members of the school council. These pupils (boys and girls) described the chair as the 'controller of the school' and highlighted the role of the school council in counselling, and discipline:

They explain what should be done and what should not be done, what it is possible to do and what it is not possible to do...

They go to meet those students that don't attend school one, two, three, four days; when they arrive there, not only do they ask them to go back to school, but they really advise them that studying is good, and they can't just not go to school.

The information above indicates that the process of electing pupil members of the school council is not as linear as described in the support manual, in which it takes place at the school in a public meeting, according to the defined procedures. In practice, there are other spaces and moments in which the pre-selection of members is carried out – above all, when selecting representatives of the community and pupils. As well as the head teacher, there are other important figures in these pre-selection processes, specifically the teachers and supervising class-year teachers, and community leaders. The existence of these moments is not necessarily bad; the question is whether they open up a space for participation of more people, or close that space. The idea of representation contained in the vision of MINEDH presupposes that the people who are represented choose who will represent them, and not that those people should be imposed on them. In spite of the election of members of the school council usually being made 'in the

5 The moment when the pupils meet on the school patio, at the beginning of the day, to sing the national anthem before going to the classrooms.

presence of the population', it is assumed that people are unlikely to contest the election of people who have been pre-selected and/or indicated by community leaders or by teachers.

We also observed that the announcement on the process of constituting the school council did not reach most residents because the channels of dissemination of information are very limited; none of the schools we visited made use of local radio stations, for example. We also note that usually, the head teacher calls the parents and guardians to a meeting without explaining its purpose.

5.2 Composition of the school council, and members' profiles

The way in which the election process takes place determines the composition and the profile of the members of the school council. The councils that we worked with comprised employees of the school (the head teacher, teaching director, and teachers), pupils, guardians, and community leaders (local and religious authorities), and were structured on the basis of three work committees – the committee on finances, property, production and school safety; the social affairs committee; and the teaching subjects committee – as indicated in the *Primary School Council Support Manual* (MINEDH 2015b: 7). However, the participation of members varies from council to council, and in the focus groups, we observed that some participants could not say which group they represented, which committee they were a member of, nor the difference between either of these entities; this led us to think that either they were members who had been chosen but never got as far as participating, or that they were people indicated only for the purpose of meeting us. We expected to find year-leader pupils on the school council, since they already occupy a position of leadership in the school, and it is they who channel the concerns of pupils to the supervising year teachers and school management; but most of the pupil members of school councils were not year-leader pupils, nor were they known to the pupils we interviewed.

The composition and profile of a school council's members are influenced not only by the will of the head teacher and community leaders, or of whoever was present at the time of the election, but also by perceptions about the purpose of school councils: whether the school council is the voice of the community in the school or of the school in the community. Most of the people we spoke to understood the school council as a mechanism to improve the performance of the school, but the roles of counsellor and providers of services to the school are more prominent than those of monitoring, inspection, and oversight of the school's activities. Many also emphasised the idea that the school council defended the interests of the school rather than those of parents and guardians. The words of a head teacher in Rapale, describing the criteria for choice of members, are revealing: '[It has to be] a person who is responsible and capable of defending the interests of the school itself, because if the person is not able to succeed in defending the interests of the school, he/she finishes up actually reproving it.'

However, the head teachers of the schools we visited also recognised the importance of having people who can mediate communications with parents and guardians – above all to legitimise the decisions taken in the school, as this statement indicates:

... the school council helps the wellbeing of the institution itself in many ways. Let's say it's an activity or an issue that arises in the school; when that's presented by the head teacher or presented by a person chosen by the people, the chair of the school council has more weight; if it's the chair of the school council, activities are facilitated because the community itself begins to see that if it's this guy [the chair of the school council] who's saying this, he's on my side, so this activity is already ours.

(Head teacher, Rapale, Nampula)

The process of choosing school council members usually takes into account their level of involvement in the subjects of the community.

The sort of people who are on the school council are: active pupils, people with more visibility in the community (for example, former combatants, retired Frelimo combatants), people who participate actively in the meetings of the community. The people with more possessions – for example, small local business people or economic agents – don't have time to take part in these meetings.

(ANDA/CEP facilitator, Sussundenga, Manica)

Other factors that are taken into consideration are: a person's social position, connections, and power of influence in the community. These characteristics are considered essential to facilitate mobilisation of parents and guardians and mediation between them and the school, especially in situations of conflict. We also note that representatives of the community in the school council are, above all, party-political leaders, local government officials, and religious people. In our view, this is a strategy to maintain good relationships with those who are considered the traditional local power-holders, and to obtain their collaboration. For example, among representatives of the community there are usually religious leaders, due to the role of faiths and religious leaders in transmitting messages, reproducing cultural norms, and influencing behaviour and attitudes – particularly in a context in which schools are increasingly involved in the struggle against early marriages and other socio-cultural practices that contribute to girls dropping out of school. Further, the participation of influential people within the community is perceived as a factor facilitating problem-solving and the quest for support at other levels. We go more deeply into this subject in Section 6.

The composition of the school council and the profile of its members reveals: perceptions about the purposes of representation; the need to balance and negotiate the interests and priorities of the school and of its pupils' parents/guardians; and the limitations that less influential people may experience if they wish to participate. We note a tension between serving the interests of the school and serving the interests of the community. While contributing to school improvements is something positive and necessary, in many cases it takes the form of serving only the interests of the school's teachers and head teacher. The statement by the head teacher in Rapale – that issues that come up in school have more weight when they are presented to the community by a 'person chosen by the people' than by the head teacher – reveals the recognition of the distance between the school and the community, and the need to collaborate with people who serve as a bridge to reduce this distance. However, as the head teacher said, it cannot be just any person; it has to be someone who can be perceived as someone who is 'on my side' – i.e. people with whom one identifies, are part of the

community and not of the school, because the school is perceived as something external to the community. In this case, the head teacher presumed that the chair 'chosen by the people' was perceived by others as being on their side, because of being a father or mother or guardian. However, the interviews and focus groups also suggested that in practice, members of school councils are perceived as a privileged group, given their proximity to the school, the lack of information on the role of the school council, and the lack of transparency in the selection and election of its members.

5.3 School council members' perceptions on the reasons why they were chosen

To deepen our understanding of the profile of the members of school councils, we asked them why they had been chosen. In the following paragraphs we analyse the perceptions of adults and pupils chosen to be school council members.

The adults highlighted that the members of the school council were people who were assiduous in their attendance at school meetings and activities, were interested in the pupils' school achievements and the functioning of the school, had influence in the community, and were considered to be of good repute – i.e. 'with good behaviour in the neighbourhood'. In Rapale, for example, one father said that he had been chosen because he supports his children to study and always seeks to 'know the latest news about the school'; his children presented their problems to him and he made the necessarily follow-up to solve them. In Sussundenga, some women said they had been chosen to be on the school council because 'there were girls who needed advice to avoid premature marriages'. Other female members said they had been chosen 'to teach the girls to sew, and to give back-up tutoring⁶ on how to write and read to the girls who don't know how to read'. In Rapale, one woman – a representative of parents and guardians – told us she thought she was chosen because she 'controls the pupils and notices who goes to school with unruly hair or badly dressed, and the teachers liked this attitude'. Abstemiousness was highlighted as a quality: one man told us he was chosen because he does not drink – 'they say that anyone who drinks insults other people, hits them, and I don't do that'; he also said that he 'works well with the people'.

Others said that holding a political position, such as being a 'former combatant' (veteran of the struggle for national liberation), or among the local leadership of the Frelimo party, had been determining factors. For example, the secretary (male) of a Frelimo party cell told us that people felt they had to choose him, both because of his status as a local party leader and also because of his track record. Similarly, another man representing the community also felt he had been chosen because he was secretary of the Frelimo party circle. During the study, we saw flags of other parties along the road, but none of the participants identified themselves as belonging to one of the opposition parties.

6 'Dar explicações', the term used, refers to complementary teaching support on subjects in the curriculum, to explain to pupils the subject being taught in the lessons, with a view to improving their school achievement.

Another source of influence that we identified was involvement in development projects. For example, one of the representatives of the community in Rapale told us that he thought he had been chosen because he was known for the work he does in the neighbourhoods served by the school, as a health activist for various NGOs:

I give lectures in the schools and churches in all the communities, and they already know who I am. So I thought that perhaps they saw me the way I offer myself – they thought that perhaps I ought to be a representative in this group.

When we asked pupils why they had been chosen, the head teachers and teachers usually answered first, that it was because they trusted them, because they did not miss lessons, and they are dedicated to the schoolwork. A head teacher in Rapale said that they seek pupils who are 'active' and capable of hearing and transmitting information; he also spoke to us about what he judged to be the criteria adopted by the other pupils, but which in our opinion reflects more the preferences of the head teachers and teachers than those of the pupils:

In general, the pupils only choose the most active pupil, who is capable of hearing and transmitting some information, this has to be one of the requirements. A pupil who will need to hear something from other pupils and take it to the council so that when it comes to the council they will have their space; so these are the requirements, and among them, they know each other – they know that pupil so-and-so here is capable of taking our message on to there.
(Head teacher, Monapo, Nampula)

In the same vein, a teacher who was a member of a school council in Rapale, Nampula, said:

The pupils here in the classroom know that this particular pupil, when the teacher asks him to read, he stands up, he reads and he is obedient, at least if one of the teachers tells him to do something, he does it immediately... In other words, he is an obedient pupil and therefore he is trusted.

Another thing reported by teachers but not captured in the extracts quoted is the importance of knowing how to read and write.

Some pupils only answered our questions after we insisted. One pupil said he was chosen because of his good behaviour in the school and in the community, and above all the fact that he was an educated and worthy person – characteristics which translate into greeting people, accompanying small children to the school, giving people a lift on your motorbike, and helping colleagues with homework. One girl pupil said she had been chosen because of helping elderly ladies in the neighbourhood to carry water. The comments by the head teachers, senior teachers, and pupils emphasised the characteristics of good behaviour – understood to mean support for and obedience to older people.

The reflections of members of school councils on why they had been chosen suggest that only people who are socially accepted and influential can become members. For the pupils, this means obedience to the teachers and adults; for parents and guardians, it means having good reputation and lack of vices; for community leaders, it means status, access to people, and power of influence. Although it was less evident, we also noted a certain expectation that members

of the school council, especially parent/guardian representatives, should involve themselves in the teaching/learning and extracurricular activities, as illustrated by the comments of the woman who indicated she had been chosen for teaching girls to read, write, and sew. Knowing how to read and write emerges as important, both for being able to read the documents being discussed by the council and also to become involved more directly in teaching/learning.

Quality of representation was mentioned only in relation to the pupils, and was mentioned by teachers rather than pupils; they spoke of the capacity to 'hear and transmit some information' and the importance of being 'capable of taking our [the pupils'] message to it [the school council]'. Only one school council chair (a woman), in Monapo, Nampula, spoke of her role in this sense – i.e. of being someone whom the community trusted to 'help the community to take the concerns of the community to the school and give back to the community the solution that comes from the school'. We judge that this view was associated with the fact that this same woman was also a facilitator with the CEP and worked for other projects, with a strong focus on participation and representation. We come back to this point in Section 7, on capacity building and access to information.

5.4 Motivation for becoming a member of the school council

Membership of the school council is voluntary and not remunerated; people usually agree to become members on this basis because they think they are helping improve the school and the community, as the following comments show:

Because the school is ours and I have to work for my own wellbeing and the wellbeing of my community.

(School council chair, Chokwè, Gaza)

In my case, what motivates me to be a member of the school council is the desire to see the school improving.

(School council member (teacher), Sussundenga, Manica)

The comment by the school council chair indicates that working with the school contributes both to his own wellbeing and to that of the community in general. However, when we asked participants how the work of the school councils could be strengthened, there were emphatic statements about the need to create incentives to motivate people to be more available; others complained that they dedicated a lot of time and energy to school activities without any remuneration.

Parents and guardians lose a lot of time in dealing with school subjects. If there was some financial support they would have more strength for them to work.

(School council member (teacher), Sussundenga, Manica)

The other challenge that I face in my social life is that I have many jobs: I have work at home; I have to go to my vegetable plot to be able to feed the family; and there is the work here in the school – for which I don't get paid anything.

(School council chair, Chokwè, Gaza)

Some interviewees said that an incentive does not necessarily need to be a monetary one, but it was important that activities that require travel should be financed, because, for example, 'it's difficult for this group to monitor some

subjects, such as children dropping out of school, because they don't have funds' (ANDA/CEP facilitator, Sussundenga, Manica). This aspect is important and merits more attention, since it affects the person's role as a representative, particularly for families that live further away from the school.

The subject of absence of remuneration also arises when there is a lot of work and the parents or guardians who are members need to ask for help from other people, who are not able to help without remuneration. A school head in Sussundenga, Manica, told us of a pupil's father who volunteered to build schoolrooms, but when he asked someone to help him that person demanded to be paid. Building schoolrooms is not one of the tasks required of school council members, but it is expected that the community should help improve and/or expand a school's infrastructure. We were also told of cases in which members who had been replaced were angry and demanded an indemnity from the school for 'time of service'.

We concluded that the idea that people are working for the school is associated with the fact that the emphasis of the work of the school council is on the functioning of the school and less on the way that the school deals with or responds to the needs of parents/guardians and the community in general. Also, since the head teacher, teachers, and technical/administrative staff are also members of the school council and are paid for working in the school, people tend to compare themselves to them because they think that, like them, they are also serving the school and not the community. We concluded that this is understandable.

5.5 The link between members of the school council and the groups they represent

The intended concept is that the school council should be the link between the school and the community, and represent the interests of various groups, including parents and guardians. In the previous section we saw some of the challenges that school council members face in carrying out this role. In this section we look at this role in more detail, in two aspects. The first aspect is interaction: (a) between members of the school council, and in particular between the members of a single group; and (b) between representatives of the parents/guardians and community and the pupils, on the one hand, and with staff, on the other (head teacher, teachers, and technical/administrative staff). The second aspect concerns how school council members communicate with other members of the community, and vice versa. Here, the underlying questions are: to what extent does the school council receive and deliver messages between the school and the community? And to what extent does it really function as a body for consultation with the community?

Some head teachers understand the importance of having the collaboration of the 'community', and this seems to be the principal incentive for interacting with school council members, and involving them in the process of preparing the plan of the school's activities. It is presumed that the school council is connected to the community:

The school council comes into this as a consultation body; we have an activity and we know that this activity, to excel, has to be practised more or less with the community; the people who are most linked to the community are the

school council, so we consult the school council [and we tell them] we have this plan, we have this activity, and the school council sees the needs... that the activity has to be carried out and thus that they should sketch out the plan and they approve it, and after it has been approved, together with the head teacher, the school council begins to follow the plan.

(Head teacher, Monapo, Nampula)

The idea of the school council as a consultation body is associated with the roles of oversight, arbitration, and mediation of conflicts. This includes warning of potential difficulties, proposing solutions, and intervening in complicated situations – for example, with the pupils and their guardians. In practice, in cases where it is functional, the school council operates more as a team supporting the head teacher or senior teachers, as illustrated by the comments below that emphasise the wellbeing of the school.

For example, from where I am, I see the school council... as a team supporting the head teacher, or the school management, also for the wellbeing of the school itself...

(Head teacher, Monapo, Nampula)

Study participants told us that re-election of school council members led to a greater interaction between school staff and other members of the board, and that in turn this contributes to a greater value being given to the opinions and suggestions of the community. Teachers and head teachers told us that before the existence of the school council there was a tendency to go forward with initiatives without consulting people, but now they have learned that ‘the school is inserted in a community’, that the community knows the location better, and that for certain activities it is important to hear their opinion.

... let's say we have an activity and we consult the community: if we have an activity to do, and the community may say, for instance, that there is not enough time to do it. At the moment, for example, we had a plan to wall off the area of the school but using local material, and I believe that if we had started it at that time we would not have been successful, but the school council said no, you can't start this activity now, wait because there is a specific time for this activity. We want to use the Moringa tree, but the community said no [because] there is a specific time for the Moringa tree to grow back so it is better to wait for that time. So some things have changed – now, the head teachers usually work with consultations, they don't manage to just decide and say this is how it is going to be.

(Head teacher, Monapo, Nampula)

That comment shows a greater openness to discuss ideas with the community and value local knowledge. On the other hand, we should emphasise that often, use of the term ‘community’ refers above all to members of the school council, which seems to us to be problematic, in the absence of mechanisms of dialogue and consultation between school council members and the community as a whole. On the other hand, while these examples relate to circumstances in which the school needs the support of the community, at the same time the effort to establish closer relationships between the school and the community also results from the awareness on the part of the head teacher and teachers that they are only there temporarily:

[It's necessary] to make the school council see that the head teacher is in a school today, and tomorrow he might leave – now if the school council itself is not active in organising the school, the head teacher leaves and the school is still the way the head teacher found it, without changes.

(Head teacher, Monapo, Nampula)

This comment shows recognition that the school should serve the community and that it should be maintained by the community. Although, at least in theory, the school council is meant to have a rotating membership, it strengthens local capacities that remain in place even when the teachers and head teachers are transferred to other schools, and these can be used to advantage by the new school council.

Usually, meetings take place at the initiative of the head teacher, or the school council chair, when other members of the school council or parents/guardians bring issues to them; but on occasion it may be the parents/guardians that propose meetings. The issues debated include themes related to pupils, such as dropping out of school and children's work inside and outside the school, or teacher absenteeism or lateness; meetings also consider overview reports on implementation of the school council's plan of activities, and rendering of financial accounts by the three committees.

We identified two circumstances in which the school council reaches out to consult the community: (a) to raise awareness on certain practices such as early marriage, initiation rites, and prevention of HIV and early pregnancy; and (b) to ask for financial, material, and personal support for specific activities, usually connected with school improvements such as building classrooms, bathrooms, or houses for the teachers, and also to work in the school's vegetable garden. Normally these meetings seek to show the community that they also have responsibilities in relation to the school.

When asked about consultation of the community in relation to activity plans of the school and the school council, and also about the use of the ADE fund, the head teachers and school council chairpersons answered that the school council *is* the community, and for this reason there was no need to discuss these matters with more people, and that it was not possible to consult the whole population. We were told several times that the school council facilitates access for the community to information about the school, but it seems that only a certain type of information can circulate (we return to this point in the subsection on transparency, and rendering of accounts), and that the process is uni-directional.

Some information that the community did not get from the school it now has through the school councils.

(ANDA/CEP facilitator, Sussundenga, Manica)

According to our interviewees, the community obtaining more knowledge about the school council has led to parents and guardians having a little more recourse to their representatives, when they have concerns.

There is an awareness on the part of parents and guardians of the role that the school council plays – for example, a long time ago pupils when they were expelled from the room went directly to the teacher to find out why, but now the parents appeal to the school council.

(ANDA/CEP facilitator, Sussundenga, Manica)

If, on the one hand, some members of the school council begin to be known in their neighbourhoods, on the other hand, they still have difficulties in helping people approach the council and explaining the mechanisms for resolving the matter in question. This is important, because it is intended that the school council should facilitate, rather than be a substitute for, interaction between teachers and parents/guardians.

In relation to pupils' participation, the study showed that there are only a few inclusive school councils – in which the pupils have significant involvement in activities, and regularly attend meetings. Also we did not find any school council in which the pupil members meet with other pupils, not even to identify and discuss subjects that they would like to bring before the other members of the school council.

We have never had a meeting between us – the pupils – to bring up the problems of other colleagues.

(School council member (pupil), Sussundenga, Manica)

The fact that the pupils are not known to their colleagues, even studying in the same school, has a negative effect on their capacity to represent those colleagues. Most of the members of the school council did not appear to perceive the importance of strengthening the link between pupils and their colleagues. Supposedly, the pupils go from schoolroom to schoolroom disseminating and reporting on the discussions and decisions of the council; it is also assumed that pupils use the daily school meeting to publicise information; but we have doubts as to how much this opportunity is used in practice by the pupils – or only by the teachers – due to its ritualistic character (which among other items includes singing the national anthem) and its disciplinary function. However, a head teacher of one of the schools admitted that he could have done more to ensure that the pupil representatives were more widely known among their peers, beyond those who had taken part in the public meeting to elect the school council:

It's a lesson that we are now learning, and I as head teacher had already noted this: it's true that after having elected these adults, after the results (of the election) of the adults and of the other boys, perhaps what was lacking was this initiative to say, every day for at least one week, for example, [to the pupils that were absent]: 'These are your colleagues – look, they're your colleagues that are on the school council'.

(Head teacher, Rapale, Nampula)

5.6 Transparency and financial reporting

In this section we discuss transparency, and rendering of accounts for the school's financial resources and expenditures, because we believe that these are essential to build trust and incentivise collaboration between the school, the school council, and the community. We discussed the management of the ADE fund at school level, concentrating on aspects relating to the link between transparency and financial reporting, on the one hand, and the function of representation, on the other – particularly consultation and involvement of the community and the management of the ADE fund resources.

In the schools that we visited, the ADE funds are perceived as helping with the functioning of the school, helping to finance activities which would otherwise have to be financed by the community; the understanding being that the ADE is a fund to cover material needs (such as notebooks, class books, printed material, pens, chalk, etc.).

In relation to that money, for example, now we have a budget and if we need something a meeting is held to make the budget, and that money, we don't even see that money, it goes out and buys everything and then it's used up... This committee goes out and picks up the money, after doing the adding up they list everything they want to buy, and afterwards we hold another meeting to report what was bought and the balance that remains in the bank is the criterion that they use.

(School council chair, Chokwè, Gaza)

Some of the important changes introduced by MINEDH in the management of ADE funds are captured in the comment by a woman who joined a school council in 2012; for five years, she was the representative of parents/guardians, and in 2016 she became chair of the same school council. As representative of parents/guardians she was a member of the 'finances and infrastructure' committee, and of the group responsible for raising the cheque from the ADE and making purchases for the school (purchases committee). Here is her description of how the process took place previously, and how it is now:

In the past, the person who received the money was the head teacher; a meeting was held to make a plan of purchases, but for a long time it was not all the people who came, there were few people. We sat down and planned what was going to be bought, what was lacking, and people were indicated to go and do the purchasing. I belonged to the purchasing committee, I went to Nampula with the school council's chairperson, we went there and we did the purchases. Three of us went: I, the chair and the head teacher. At that time the head teacher was the person who received the money and also the person who went to do the buying. Last year, when I took over [as chair], what happens is that that business of the head teacher receiving the money has changed; now it's the chair, and one person indicated, who go out, it might be the secretary [of the school council] or another person, to collect the cheque here in Monapo [from the SDEJT] – that person goes to the bank to get the money and that's after the plan has been made. The next day after picking up the money that person goes to do the buying. When the SDEJT reports that it has received the funding, the school makes its plans, and that's when one sees what's lacking and what we are going to buy, and the plans are made; one plans before going to pick up the cheque. After getting the cheque is when we go to do the purchases, because the money can't stay at the school, nor at the chair's house for two, three days. We pick up the money, then go to do the buying [in Nampula] and on the next day the goods receipt committee [which consists of the head teacher, a pupil member of the school council, and one parent] is there and we deliver the material [notebooks, chalk, board wipers, pens, pencils, brooms, rakes, etc.]

(School council chair, Monapo, Nampula)

This comment makes reference to the two committees of the ADE that are specified in the *Manual of Procedures for the Direct Support for Schools Fund*: the

purchasing committee and the goods receipt committee. Although the directives in the manual are significant and clear, in practice few schools receive this manual, and the SDEJT does not have sufficient capacity to monitor compliance with it. Beyond posting information in windows, there is no mechanism – at least no formal mechanism – for the community to have access to the information and/or to discuss its content and to influence future decisions. The ADE seems to be a grey area for the other members of the school council, and a source of misunderstanding, distrust, and dissatisfaction for the school community in general. We heard that whereas in some schools (where there is an operational school council, trained and informing the community about its activities) there are beginning to be ‘signs of transparency in the management of the funds’, the information collected suggests that in most schools, the weak links between the school council and community as a whole, particularly the absence of proper rendering of financial accounts, has undermined the relationship between the two parties. There is a clear lack of trust between the two.

The community is distrustful of the school’s requests for contributions made via the school council, because they judge that the state budget and the ADE fund should cover all expenses. The lack of information on the amount of ADE funding, the process of disbursement, and its use, generates many doubts and misunderstandings, to the point where in some places the ADE fund is referred to as the *Apoio ao Director e suas Esposas* (Fund for Support of the Head Teacher and his Wives). The community distrusts the head teachers and teachers, and perceives the other members of the school council as acting in collusion with them. One woman, a representative of the technical/administrative staff in a school council in Chokwè, Gaza, said that there was a need for ‘a good talk with the community to give an explanation’, because the parents and guardians:

... say that they cannot help the school because the school receives an amount from the government, but it's necessary to explain that the amount already comes allocated to various things. They do not perceive that this amount is to help the school in other things – not only for construction [of classrooms and bathrooms]. The guardians finish up saying that they won't give us anything, because the school has money; since this [the contribution] is not obligatory, they finish up backing out [not contributing].

The distrust on the part of the community shows itself in other areas of the school council’s work, such as school farm output production. A teacher member of the school council in Chokwè, Gaza, told us that the school has a vegetable plot, and to maintain it they need the support of parents and guardians with materials (e.g. hoes, ploughs, etc.) that they could loan to the school. Also the orchard needs conservation and protection against theft, which would be easier for parents and guardians who live close to the school, as most of the teachers live in the city of Chokwè. According to this teacher, although the crops grown are for the good of the school and the pupils – for example, when lettuce and kale are ready they take the products and sell them, and use the money to make snack lunches for the children – the parents think that the vegetable garden is for the benefit of the teachers, and refuse to help.

When we asked head teachers and school council chairpersons about rendering accounts for the ADE funds they received, the most frequent reply was that this

was not done, since this was presented to the other members of the school council that represent the community and the parents/guardians. This response reflects the view expressed in the *Manual of Procedures for the Direct Support for Schools Fund* that: 'The community take part in the process of management of the ADE through its representatives on the School Council. Also, the school should always involve parents and guardians and also the community authority in its routine' (MINEDH 2015a: 27).

In one of the schools we also heard that sharing detailed information about the use of the ADE funds was counterproductive, since there were a lot of thefts in the school. According to the chair of the school council, they sought to avoid people knowing what had been bought in order to prevent thefts; the school had already been broken into several times and teachers' material had been stolen.

Another aspect that we sought to explore in this study was the use of ADE funding and the criteria for distribution of the materials acquired. According to our interviewees, orphaned and vulnerable children are given privileged treatment – which we judged to be a response to the introduction, in 2004/05, of the component relating to school health, HIV, and support for orphaned and vulnerable children. These children are principally identified in the classrooms, by the teachers:

The 30 per cent is used for such things as mending desks, buying computers, and other things. What is left is used to buy teaching materials. When returning from purchases, each teacher makes a requisition to list the material because before the purchase, each teacher makes a requisition of the material that is lacking for his/her classroom; to get it they have to present the requisitions. The material is distributed to children by class because each teacher knows which child has needs. We adopt a system of making children aware in the classrooms and [the teachers] say that here we have orphan children, disabled children, and these children need support. If there is a [request for] contribution of building blocks in the school [or] money for security guards, certain children are exempt from contributing. We have to help because they are children who are in need – so you have to understand when notebooks, rubbers or let's say uniforms arrive, then it's only for them. So there have been these lectures, each teacher in their own class. (School council chair, Chokwè, Gaza)

We were unable to clarify what criteria are used to define which children are orphans or vulnerable. The interviews and the focus groups highlighted, above all, the role of the head teacher's office. Although the *Primary School Council Support Manual* includes specific guidance on the need to identify orphaned and vulnerable children – to increase access to education for this disadvantaged group – there are no clearly defined instruments for how to do this, and so the criteria appear to be random and subjective.

Before continuing, we would like to highlight some aspects discussed in this section. School councils were instituted as a mechanism for creating the link between the school and the community, and we understand, that, in light of our conceptual framework, this process should be translated into the act of taking messages from the school to the community and vice versa. We further understand that this process is crucial because it makes it possible to ensure that the voices and needs of those who are represented are transmitted to the school. In this sense, to represent

means to make a functional channel of transmission, and not substitution and/or silencing, by the representatives, of the voices of those represented. However, we found that although some members of the school council have this awareness, in practice, the council substitutes consultation with the community; indeed, in most cases, school council members approximate themselves to the school, but the rest of the community remains distant. This distancing is reflected in the community's reluctance to collaborate with the school – which is exacerbated by the lack of clarity and mistrust around use of the support requested and also of the funding received by the school from MINEDH. The emphasis on the wellbeing of the school in the discourse on school councils, to the detriment of the pupils and the community, also helps to reinforce the distance between school council members and the community – since the members come to be perceived as agents of the school.

In this section we have described and looked into the question of how the process of representation takes place at the level of the school council, paying particular attention to the process of transmitting messages between the school and the community and vice versa. We have seen that this process tends to be uni-directional, due to the little contact that exists between the school councils and the people they say they represent; however, there is awareness of the need to strengthen community involvement. We have also seen that many of the challenges facing school councils go beyond local capacity for resolving them. In the following section we explore how members of the school council deal with these challenges, concentrating on processes of seeking support at other levels (district, provincial, and national) and from other actors beyond the education sector. The discussion touches on the question of representation and inclusion, as well as location.

6 Analysis of findings:

(3) representation in seeking support for solutions to problems

Finding solutions to the problems faced by the school requires contributions from various actors. The school councils have foremost responsibility for mobilising these contributions, including financial and material support. The work committees described in Section 2 are also mechanisms for mobilising various types of support and resolving problems. In the following paragraphs we concentrate on those actors outside the school council and the school who can support (or have supported) school councils, and also on capacity for support and accessibility, as perceived by members of the school councils with whom we worked.

The discussion was based on a participatory exercise with the members of the school council in which we drew a map to identify: the actors who usually help them or could help them; to what extent (i.e. whether they have the capacity to help a lot, an average amount, or a little); and up to what point they are accessible. We investigated accessibility more in political-institutional terms than geographical terms, in spite of the fact that physical distance is often a key constraint due to the costs of transport involved in travelling for meetings with institutions located far from people's homes or workplaces.

One of the difficulties we had with the exercise was that when we asked about people who could help, participants had a tendency to identify actors who were part of the school community and/or local leaders, particularly in Monapo. In all the school councils we visited, initially people said they did not know who could help them. For example, in Sussundenga, they said that they saw ANDA (an implementing partner of the CEP which conducted the CPC process at that location), and business people, as 'being very distant' from their community, and for this reason they trusted the administrator of the district for solutions to problems. In all the districts visited, we heard that in spite of there being problems which did not need external support (from outside the community) – because they were able to solve the problems themselves – the exercise had helped them reflect on when, how, and where to seek help to solve other problems.

Table 6.1 summarises the discussions we had with two school councils in Nampula, one in Rapale and one in Monapo. The one in Monapo is supported by the CEP; the other is not.⁷

The actors indicated in the table were identified by the various members of the school council, including the head teacher. In terms of actors that have helped (in the past or currently), in Rapale people highlighted the immediate response and support from the SDEJT in various situations, and the importance of the private sector, particularly the company Novos Horizontes, which they consider to be very supportive and accessible: 'when we present our difficulties it's very fast, they succeed in providing response really fast'. In Chokwè, economic agents were so important that one of them (the one that supported the school the most), although not even a member, occasionally took part in meetings of the school council. In Monapo, most of the economic agents mentioned were (paid) providers of services to the school, except one that had donated batches of bamboo for construction of schoolrooms.

The participants of the focus groups said that although the multilateral and bilateral organisations and international NGOs (UNICEF, USAID, Save the Children, and Progresso) were not accessible, they were also capable of listening to their worries, as was the company Novos Horizontes. This had not yet happened because the members of the school council 'did not have a long enough arm to reach that far [to those organisations]'; hence they need someone who can channel their concerns to those institutions. The actors they considered they had easy access to were those that they could approach without making an appointment or 'hearing' – those that visit the school to find out how things are going, and appear to be predisposed to help.

In relation to the SDEJT, in Rapale they said that these were actors that they could approach 'without going through any special procedures'; in Chokwè and Sussundenga, they were considered relatively accessible. However, all emphasised

7 In the introduction to this report we briefly described the work of training/teaching that CEP carried out with some school councils (a subject that we go into more deeply in Section 7), and the centrality of the process of the community scorecard. We also spoke of the initiatives taken by CESC to escalate issues identified by the school councils to other levels, through participation in the preparation, and monitoring of implementation, of the policies and strategies of the education sector, promotion of networks of school councils, invitations to members (chairpersons) to national events such as the International Seminar on Community Participation in School Management, and advocacy campaigns.

Table 6.1 Actors who have helped in the past and/or can currently help the school council

District	Actors	Capacity to support	Access	Others
Rapale	International economic agent 1	Average	Easy	Small expenses; they visit the school every day to distribute boiled eggs to the pupils. ⁸
	National economic agent 1 (<i>Matias Ferreira</i>)	Average	Average	Help with material
	National economic agent 2 (<i>Novos Horizontes</i>)	Great	Easy	Support considered memorable and 'historic'
	Community	Small	Easy	Small works
	Bilateral organisation (<i>United States Agency for International Development (USAID)</i>)	Great	Difficult	Don't know where their office is and have never succeeded in approaching them.
	Multilateral organisation (<i>United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)</i>)	Great	Difficult	Don't know where their office is and have never succeeded in approaching them. ⁹
	International NGO 1 (<i>Save the Children</i>)	Great	Difficult	Don't know where their office is and have never succeeded in approaching them.
	International NGO 2 (<i>Progresso</i>)	Average	Average	Gives assistance, but takes a long time to respond.
	SDEJT	Great	Easy	Gave support in the establishment of the school council and in the transfer of the school to a new location. ¹⁰
	District health services	Average	Easy	Helped in the area of school health and sexual and reproductive health.
Monapo	Economic agent 1	Average	Difficult	Donated batches of bamboo for construction of schoolrooms.
	Community/residents close to the school		Easy	Work in the vegetable plot.
	Municipal council	Great	Difficult	Can be appealed to for various subjects; support with material, donated by a Portuguese company.
	Community leaders and local chiefs (<i>régulos</i>)	Great	Easy	Help dealing with social problems (e.g. early marriages, vandalism).
	Local NGO (<i>Watana</i>)	Great	Easy	Subjects that need money, including infrastructure such as schoolrooms.
	Parents and guardians	Great	Easy	Subjects that need money, such as infrastructure (e.g. schoolrooms).
	Teachers	Average	Easy	Identified by pupil members of the school council; help to solve problems inside and outside the classroom.

Source: Authors' own.

8 A group of foreign young people from the company Empresa Ovos de África appeared at the school when we were holding a focus group and after distributing boiled eggs to the pupils, started to paint a room with the secretary of the school.

9 Supports government in the area of education and gives study grants to orphaned and underprivileged children.

10 The previous school existed from colonial times, and was located beside a national highway, in a place considered to be isolated (because, over time, the population left the area), some 2.5km from the new school's location, which led to several children being run over. The transfer of the school was the result of support from the company Novos Horizontes, after an initiative by the new head teacher and the Frelimo party circle, with little involvement of the school council (because although it existed it was disorganised) or from the SDEJT.

that although these institutions were accessible to requests, because the schools are 'the base of the education sector pyramid' there are subjects that they cannot resolve, such as opening a secondary school closer to where they live. Initially, none of the school councils mentioned other levels of the education sector, except when the subject of the secondary school in Rapale came up, or when we asked about it explicitly (in Chokwè, Monapo, and Sussundenga). When we asked them why this absence of mention, they answered that they concentrated on the district services, because 'it's the leader, the head [of the community] who transfers the subjects to the province': they 'knock on the door' of the SDEJT and it is they who know which door to knock on. They assumed that the SDEJT had capacity to reach other levels, at which it would represent the school councils. The members of the school council did not even contemplate the possibility of going directly to the DPEDH or to MINEDH, even in cases where the SDEJT did not give a response to their concerns. The reason was not only because of their 'not having a long enough arm', but above all because they consider that there is a hierarchy, and lines of authority, that need to be followed, as the following statements from focus group discussions in Rapale show:

It's that they (SDEJT) are in the role of the people responsible here in the district, who can perhaps give answers for our concerns, our subjects. If we go ahead without first telling them our very, very urgent needs, and talk to the province, they say: '... but have you already brought this up with the district? You've got your head teachers and administrators there and they haven't said anything to us, about any concern that you have, and now you're bringing it here'.
(School council member, Rapale, Nampula)

The education sector is also within the structure of the district... part of the government of the district... Now the government of the district is headed by his Excellency Mr Administrator, [with his administrative hierarchy]. So you start – so as not to skip the hierarchies – you go to the head of the post, tell him your such concern, and you put it forward many times in the structure of the education sector at district level – with each one to see what their reaction might be. If all these don't produce any result, it's then that we go to the Excellency Mr Administrator himself, and we say: 'Mr Administrator, we have this situation that we have brought up so many times with our education sector, and also the community or the school, nothing was resolved, so we then went to the... Ah! Then he, as head of the government of the district, may produce a... a... a solution, whatever it might be. So if we take the attitude that 'ah, this place is not going to give us a solution', going up there should not be something that causes the reaction 'but why did you come here to say that, back there, there aren't any capable people?'
(Head teacher, Rapale, Nampula)

We have difficulty in getting through to a company, an embassy... What we know is that first, we have to take the subject to the head man [of our neighbourhood], but often he doesn't pass it on, it stops there. In this case, it doesn't depend only on us, because in the case of the fencing he didn't promise it only to the school, he promised it to the whole community, in the presence of the head man. If we go there and make demands, they will say that they didn't promise anything to us, but to the head man. Often, these companies when they come, don't come to us, they go to talk to the head man.
(School council member, Chokwè, Gaza)

The members of the school council highlighted the need to 'analyse things according to the hierarchy', 'not to skip hierarchies', and to put the subjects in their due places; to go to the DPEDH would be 'to disobey', 'to violate the rules' and this 'isn't a good thing to do'. They also emphasised the need to follow the lines of governmental authority at the district level, hence the importance of first talking to the local leaders and then to the district administrator, to the detriment of other levels within the education sector. This means that for a subject to reach MINEDH by any route other than the SDEJT, they would have to go through this whole hierarchical chain. If DPEDH does not respond and/or resolve an issue, they would have to take it to the provincial government before presenting it to MINEDH.

In the last of the comments above, the second part refers to the interaction with economic agents of the private sector, and the difficulty of making them keep promises – as in the case of an agreement, in 2014, where the community conceded part of its space to a businessman who wanted to plant vegetable plots in exchange for building a fence around the school. The businessman then occupied the land (planted a vegetable area), but did not build the fencing. When we asked what they had done about this, they answered: 'The person who has the responsibility of asking [that the businessman should keep his promise] is the head man [of the neighbourhood] to whom he came to ask for the space.' Another member said: 'There are many things that we don't say', and when we insisted on what could happen if we were to go and talk directly with the businessman, one of the participants said '[the head man of the neighbourhood] can expel you from the zone, because you are taking away his work'. These phrases denote an extreme respect for the authority and hierarchy motivated by fear of reprisals, which in turn affects the autonomy and innovation of members of the school council, inhibiting one of its six guiding principles, specifically: 'Promotion of creative initiative by the members for the development of the school' (MINEDH 2015b: 9).

However, we also found that depending on the type of problem and who is involved in it, there is a frequently used alternative route which has to do with the influence of the Frelimo party on the functioning of the state. During a focus group, one of the representatives of the community told us that before the arrival of the new head teacher they had many problems and for this reason several times asked the SDEJT and DPEDH to replace the previous head teacher; both entities promised to resolve the matter, but nothing was done. As they tell it, the new head teacher only arrived when, together with the first secretary of the Frelimo party, they decided to complain to other (provincial) levels of the party; they believe that they succeeded in influencing the DPEDH through the Frelimo party and through the 'father of the province himself, who is the governor' – who is also part of Frelimo, and not part of the SDEJT. Head teachers understand the advantages of having local leaders of the Frelimo party as part of the school council. We questioned them on the implications of members of other political parties also becoming members of the school council.¹¹

It is important to note that we found differences in perception, within different school councils, on the capacity of the SDEJT to provide support, and on access

11 This is an aspect that merits more analysis: on the one hand the local leaders of the Frelimo party have more capacity to escalate subjects to other levels for resolution; while the local leaders of some opposition parties may have more capacity to mobilise the population.

to it. In Rapale, the comments that we recorded emphasised the availability and proximity of the SDEJT; while in the school in Monapo, nobody identified the SDEJT, DPEDH, or MINEDH as an actor that could help them in solving problems. When we asked why, they answered that although the government helps the school (for example, supplies books without having to pay for them), and when there is a shortage of books and/or teachers they appeal to the district services, they are afraid to make an approach because they receive orientations from various employees of the sector for them to seek solutions for their local problems at the local level, as this speech illustrates:

The government has said that the school is the property of the community, so because of this many efforts are being made, it's the community that's having to manage actions taken. When people say that the school is the community's, as a result when the district services receive a request on a subject they tell us to find a way of solving it at local level. So when this happens, we seek ways at local level of finding other instances to provide solutions. At some point the district services forget that they're meant to have a relationship of 'father' [with the school].

(School council member (female), Monapo, Nampula)

They said that if in a family the son asks the father for something and the father says 'go and ask the uncle for it', the son will never ever come back and ask his father for anything, because he will be afraid, and will always finish up asking the uncle. In the case of the school council, this means seeking the support of other actors to solve problems of the school. As an example, when they wanted to build more classrooms, they asked for support from Watana, an implementation partner of the CEP, which had implemented the CPC process in the school. The members of this school council, in Monapo, believed that although the SDEJT and DPEDH are the 'mother and father' of the school councils, 'the community should do something' and not just wait for help from those two institutions. It was in this context that they underlined the need to identify other actors to support them, above all local businessmen and contractors, who can finance works in the school, since many pupils continued to 'study in the open air'. Due to the difficulty of finding financing outside the community, it is frequently the parents and guardians who pay for small works in the school. For example, during our visit, the school showed us a pile of iron donated by parents and guardians for construction of two more classrooms.

The focus group discussions with school council members revealed the absence of mechanisms of representation of the school councils at various levels of the education sector and also of district school council platforms, which provide a space both for exchange of experiences and for submitting and seeking collective solutions to the problems faced by schools and school councils. We believe that these are necessary spaces for encouraging autonomy and creativity on the part of school councils. When reviewing the literature and fieldwork, we became aware of various initiatives that aimed to strengthen the school councils, such as: holding provincial and national conferences of school councils; exchanges of experience between members of school councils of the same district; and the (still limited) establishment in a few districts of education networks comprising members (school council chairs) like the one we found in Monapo. However, these efforts are very dispersed, and are usually developed within the scope of development programmes

and projects that have short or medium duration, with a focus on the provinces and districts where these organisations work, leaving various schools with no support.

In relation to the support supplied by the organisations that are implementers of the CEP, this was only spontaneously mentioned in Monapo, in relation to Watana – something which we judged to be due to the fact that the school council chairperson was also facilitator of that organisation. Although in the other school councils it had been necessary for us to ask whether the organisations had already provided some type of support, and few were able to speak of the CPC process, the facilitators of the programme who accompanied us were known to the school head teachers and some members of the school councils. Some participants, however, referred to the capacity building carried out by the SDEJT, with the support of the CEP, but had no knowledge of who had financed the initiative. In the following section we discuss the theme of capacity building for school councils, including the support provided by the CEP.

7 Analysis of findings: (4) capacity building and other strategies of support for school councils

The subject of capacity building, which we deal with in this final part of the report, permeates all of the issues already discussed, and also most of the initiatives to support school councils. The primary and secondary data analysed underline the importance of capacity building and of access to information for members of school councils, head teachers and the community, both about the role of a school council and the meaning of *representation* and *inclusion*. MINEDH and various other entities operating in the education sector recognise the need for capacity building to improve the role of the school councils. The use of the word *renewal* (*‘revitalização’*) in relation to school councils, used in various official documents, and in comments made by participants in our study, expresses the need to strengthen the existing mechanisms or linkages between the school and the community – i.e. to impress a new vigour on the ‘highest body for consultation, monitoring and inspection of the school’ (MINEDH 2015b: 7).

‘Revitalisation’ of a school council usually takes place in two complementary ways: through renewal of its membership, and through capacity building.

7.1 Renewal of membership of school councils

According to the manual, the school council is elected for a period of two consecutive years, which may be renewed once, and there may also be interruption of a period of office for personal reasons and replacement of members at their request, or by decision of the school council. The document also provides for members to be expelled for inadequate performance of functions, behaviour incompatible with their functions, or other reasons. Although this dimension is not explicitly mentioned in the *Primary School Council Support Manual*, we consider

that an essential element of the process of 'revitalisation' is that it creates scope for renewal in the composition of school councils and entry of new representatives of pre-identified groups, in particular parents and guardians, teachers, technical/administrative staff, pupils, and the community. The interviews and focus groups we held indicated that the process of renewal is, above all, perceived as 'the election of new members and the re-election of new members', 'some members leaving and new members entering', 'renewal of the contract', and 'replacement of members [teachers and technical/administrative staff] who have been transferred, and of pupils who have left the school'. The process of renewal is seen as necessary not only due to transformation in the personal, professional, and academic life of school council members, but also to replace people who 'thought they were the owners of the school council'¹² – due to having been in the position for a long time. We found people who had occupied the position for six or seven years, especially the representatives of parents/guardians or of the community; we only found one *pupil* who had been a member for six years.

Some of the people we spoke with, including technical staff of the SDEJT and head teachers, spoke of the disadvantages of members remaining for longer than the stipulated period, because they consider that this compromised the credibility and legitimacy of the school council in the eyes of the residents of the surrounding area or, as one SDEJT technical staff member put it: 'The community sees that nothing around here is serious'. Other advantages of 'renewal' include showing the importance of members being active and showing that they are capable of carrying out the required functions, because if not they can be replaced during the first period of office. This highlights the understanding that being a member of the school council means being at the service of others who have given you a vote of confidence, to whom they should be held account on question of their performance.

Changes in the chairmanship create competition which... generates positive results for the school itself, but when a chair has been in office for a long time, he seeks to have only his friends there with him, and avoid the participation of others.
(SDEJT technical staff member, Sussundenga, Manica)

When we are on the school council we are evaluated, and in this process when two years have gone by, people may possibly not give a vote of confidence; this stimulates the performance of the members of the school council and of a teacher member.

(School council member (teacher), Sussundenga, Manica)

7.2 Capacity building

During the fieldwork we found that in most cases where there was 'renewal', the process was accompanied by some type of capacity building in the light of MINEDH's manual (to ensure that new members were trained to perform their role effectively) and that this was often at the initiative of other levels of the education sector and/or other entities with active programmes in the schools (e.g. initiatives

12 It was not possible to find out whether the belief that they were 'owners of the school council' applied only to being a member for more time than the others, and not wanting to leave the position, or also referred to demanding greater accountability on the part of the school.

Box 7.1 CEP support to school councils

The CEP supported the training of school councils to create a situation of dialogue in service-providing units (schools), under the community scorecard (CPC) process. In implementing the CPC, the school councils are tasked with creating regular meetings to monitor the plan of action and follow up on issues that have not been resolved at the unit (school) level. Some training was given to respond to local needs in situations of change in the membership of the councils (renewals) or in situations in which its functioning was considered deficient, at the request of the schools and of the provincial and district education services. This process was coordinated between the provincial management units of the CEP and the education sector (provincial and district-level departments). The staff of the provincial management levels and district services conducted the training so that the process was not seen as something brought in by external organisations or elements. The CEP mobilised head teachers, gave support in preparation of the programmes of training, and helped with financing and logistics, but the training itself was carried out by people from the provincial and district educational management units. For example, in Nampula, the CEP, through the Unidade de Gestão Provincial (Provincial Management Unit (UGP)) and through Watana, collaborated with the SDEJT in training of nine school councils; these training activities were carried out by schools, and covered the majority of the council members; the partnership included payment of some costs, and transport for the technical staff of the SDEJT to carry out quarterly supervision of the performance of those council members that had received training.

Source: Claudino Goodyfry, CEP management team.

for capacity building in the mechanisms of citizen participation in the provision of education services, such as the CEP – see Box 7.1).

According to participants in our study, the training sessions carried out introduced a new dynamic in the functioning of the school councils. In particular: (i) they strengthened the idea that the school belongs to the community and not to the head teacher; (ii) they generated greater clarity on the roles and responsibilities of each member through establishing committees for specific areas and tasks; and (iii) they contributed to a greater openness on the part of head teachers to participation of members of the school council, and also for the school council to become more inclusive.

Now the members of the school council are aware that, at the end of the day, the school is theirs, but from where we come from, the conception was a little different: some believed that the school was the property of the head teacher, so that if the head teacher was not strong they were weak, but now it's the opposite. They feel that they are owners of the school... that they should take the decisions in the school, and as a result they actually start to coordinate the management of the school... For example, the school has a plan of activity that in the past we used to present only on the day of official opening – saying: 'We've got this plan, this is what we're going to do, we'll do this, and that's it.' At that time one didn't notice any interaction with the school council; now it's different. The school council wants to see what's in the plan and wants to know if we're able to succeed in doing what's in the plan.

(Head teacher, Monapo, Nampula)

People did not use to perceive the role of this mechanism. With the training, the people are now aware of the role and succeed in informing the community on the functioning of the ADE and inform them about the decisions that come

out of the meetings. Previously, the training of the school council did not involve the pupils, it was only the community and the head teacher; now it involves the pupils. The councils used to function without plans and now they have plans; in the past the councils existed, but the periods of office were not obeyed, the head teacher did not obey the rules of functioning. There were people who were more active and less active, and the more active people continued to run the councils for a long time.

(CEP facilitator, Sussundenga, Manica)

The first comment above underlines the importance of capacity building for making members of the school council aware of the purposes of the body and also about each person's role. The notions of 'being owners of the school', of 'taking decisions in the school', and of 'wanting to see the plan of activities of the school' highlight the empowerment of school council members in relation to their rights. This aspect was also mentioned by one head teacher, in Chokwè, who spoke about a higher level of awareness about the rights of children, particularly orphaned and vulnerable children, and of the benefits entitlements of those families officially categorised as poor. The second of the two comments highlights the idea of being a connecting link, of taking messages to and from the school and the community, and also the involvement of the pupils – the group directly affected by good or bad functioning of the school.

Another aspect highlighted by our interviewees was the difference that it makes – both for employees of the school and for other members of the school council – to be able to obtain and read the school council manual, a document they frequently refer to for guidance if in doubt. Less evident in participants' comments was the relationship between the school council and the community.

One of the quotes refers only to 'informing the community about the functioning of the ADE funds', but says nothing about how the community can influence processes in the school, including how the ADE funds are spent.

7.3 Spaces for reflection and learning

One element of the CEP's support for school councils was the creation of spaces for reflection where members could share their experiences and learn from each other, and explore strategies to overcome their difficulties. For example, in February 2017, Watana carried out an exchange of experiences with school councils in the district of Monapo, Nampula.

On that occasion, each school where the CEP had worked¹³ presented its experience on how it had resolved its problems, and/or submitted them to other levels. These events enabled members to go more deeply into their knowledge, create links with others, and increase their skills for discussing and intervening in issues raised by the councils themselves and the citizens who use school services. The events were connected to the process of action-reflection-learning-action, about and with the education sector, aiming to improve their interventions and generate knowledge about citizenship, participation, and social responsibility in Mozambique.

13 In some cases school councils that were covered by the CEP took part in these events.

These events aimed to fill the gap and create a mechanism to exchange experience between the school councils at the levels of teaching intervention zones, district, and province referenced by the matrix of recommendations of the Second School Councils National Conference. It can be noted that the CEP assisted the Provincial Schools Councils Conference financially (the Gaza conference).

In Section 6 we spoke of the challenges faced by school councils in seeking support for solving problems they identify. An important effect of the exchange of experiences is that it inspires participants to seek solutions for their problems. For example, one school council in Gaza decided to seek the support of Mcel (the Mozambican mobile telephone company) to solve the problem of insufficient classrooms, and from this a three-year partnership developed. Mcel installed an antenna on the school premises, and in return the school began to receive 12,000 meticaïs¹⁴ monthly – an amount which was used, among other things, to build schoolrooms. In Manica, a school council sought support from the municipality to build an access ramp for disabled children.

7.4 Advocacy campaigns and networks

Many other schools face similar problems with insufficient classrooms or lack of access ramps. While some problems may have immediate solutions, others require more effort and resources because they concern structural issues that affect the national educational system, such as absenteeism of teachers or pupils dropping out of school. Further, due to the absence of formal mechanisms through which MINEDH can hear parents' and guardians' concerns and suggestions, allied to the difficulties of keeping up with and monitoring school councils, there is a need to create spaces, for citizens, to articulate their positions and make their demands heard by decision makers at different levels. On this aspect, several actors have supported the establishment of networks of school councils that carry out advocacy at district level, and have implemented advocacy campaigns on recurring priority issues in the ambit of the CPC process. This is a widening of scope of the representation and mediation of the school councils in the sense of 'taking messages to and fro between different spaces and levels', especially those at which decisions are taken. The existence of formal platforms for dialogue and consultation with school councils at district, provincial, and national levels would strengthen the capacity of school councils and also the participative management of schools.

14 Metical (MZN) is the Mozambican currency; 12,000 meticaïs is approximately £148.

8 Conclusions and recommendations

8.1 Conclusions

This study has concentrated on an important mechanism for promoting citizen participation in school management in Mozambique – the school council. We observed that the establishment of school councils was part of broader efforts by the education sector to forge closer links between schools and the local community, developed since the time of Mozambique's independence and inspired by the experience of the 'liberated zones' during the fight for national liberation. In this context, the Ministry (MINEDH) has developed various initiatives for strengthening the role of school councils to ensure greater involvement of the community in school matters and to improve the significance of each school for its surrounding community. These initiatives have been developed in partnership with various bilateral and multilateral organisations and also by various Mozambican and international NGOs.

The conceptualisation of representation and mediation as 'taking messages to and from between different spaces and levels' leads us to ask: ultimately, whose perceptions, demands, and priorities do members of a school council represent? It is in the search for an answer to this question that it becomes important to analyse inclusion in the processes of representation and mediation. Representation and mediation determine the quality of the connections between the school council and other spaces, whether at the level of the community – for choice of representatives and seeking out perceptions and choice of priorities – or at other levels of governance, in seeking support for solutions to problems that cannot be solved locally.

One aspect that was evident from the review of documents and the fieldwork was the sizeable gap between: (a) the way that MINEDH envisaged school councils would work and the expectations of various people and parties involved about their role (especially those who implement programmes of support to the education sector); and (b) the real conditions and possibilities that school councils have.

School councils fall very short of their expected role, and although they are made up of 'representatives' of different groups, there is a major gap of representation, rooted in the school community's understanding about what representing means, and in how school council representatives are chosen, and who, as a result, remains outside the school management processes; the implication is that only members of the school council are involved.

School councils were supposed to be the voice of the community in the school, and the voice of the school in the community. However, there is a considerable tension between performing the two roles. In all the schools we visited, the school council tended to be more at the service of the school than of the community, which means that the priorities tend to be set by the school and not by the community.

Even so, being a member of the school council does not automatically mean having a voice and power to influence developments. Even when a given group of people has access to a space, there are various different forms of power that can operate to exclude their opinions or silence their voices. The rules of hierarchical and patriarchal power inhibit the voice of women and children in decision-making.

The use of technical language (or simply of the official national language, in places where most people express themselves only in the local language) can function to intimidate people with little or no schooling. These forms of 'invisible power' can reinforce the inequalities resulting from formal rules and networks of influence and even further exclude the poorest and most marginalised people. Inclusion determines which perceptions and priorities are incorporated into the processes of representation, and which are left out of the agenda of the decisions and of the list of questions to be taken to other levels.

We observed that factors such as geographical proximity to the school, age, gender, and political-party affiliation influence which citizens are chosen as a member of the school council. Of the school councils we visited, most comprised people who live in the immediate local neighbourhood of the school. This disparity is perceived as something positive by the people we interviewed, who argue that this facilitates communication, the holding of meetings, and the solving of problems. However, the weak or non-existent representation of the more distant neighbourhoods on the school council has consequences for the link between the schools and the residents of those neighbourhoods. Also, while parents and guardians may be called to meetings, the objectives of the meetings are not made explicit, thus they cannot make informed decisions.

The study revealed the difficulties that members of school councils face in identifying actors that can collaborate and/or to whom they can channel problems they identify – i.e. the power to advocate. They are not prepared enough to engage in processes of advocacy and they do not have alternative mechanisms (other than the SDEJT) for channelling their concerns to other levels of the education sector. Excessive obedience to authority and hierarchy inhibit their creativity and tend to contain pro-activeness. However, the study showed the difference that capacity building, facilitation of processes of action-reflection-learning-action, and the existence of advocacy campaigns and networks, make in strengthening the capacities of the members of school councils.

This study did not aim to evaluate the CEP, but to understand how questions of representation and inclusion affect school councils. However, given that it was carried out in the ambit of the programme, and that the programme has worked with school councils, we think it relevant to consider its contribution, even if briefly.

It is important to state that this contribution took place in four ways: (i) supporting provincial management and district education services in creating/renewing school councils and building their capacity; (ii) helping the education authorities in their efforts to improve the tools and processes used to supervise and monitor school councils; (iii) creating spaces for school councils to discuss and share experiences; and (iv) helping to fund training of school councils, visits for monitoring and supervision, and a provincial schools councils conference (in Gaza).

8.2 Recommendations

In Mozambique, age is the structuring element of the relationships of power and hierarchy; but both the content of training and also the spaces for participation tend to neglect the way in which age affects interactions between adults and children, inside and outside of the school council.

There is a need to find better ways to involve pupils to ensure that they can contribute effectively and influence both the work of the school council and the school itself. This should include rethinking the content and format of the capacity building of school councils; incorporating training modules on children's participation and voice, specifically designed for children and adults; as well as integrating pupils in spaces of reflection, learning, and advocacy. These initiatives would encourage children to feel that they are also 'owners' of the school council.

The school councils are an important space for identifying and discussing pertinent issues, and also for advocating for and protecting the rights and priorities of children with special educational needs.

For this, it is necessary that: (i) parents and guardians of children with special educational needs should be represented on school councils; (ii) the category of community representatives should be widened to include activists and professionals who work with children with disabilities; and (iii) there is more capacity building on the subject of disability and special educational needs for all members of the school council, in such a way that they are aware and committed to the needs of these children, independently of whether or not they have a child with a disability or special educational needs.

Due to the lack of information within communities, there is a need for greater investment both in the channels of dissemination of information and also in the content of the information/message itself so that people understand what the school council is and how they can be part of it and/or reach it. School head teachers should take advantage of other moments in the school calendar to disseminate information about school councils and not merely wait for the start of the academic year; they could also promote initiatives outside the schools, involving members of the school council, who should actively present themselves as such and not just as teachers, community leaders, or parents/guardians. This is particularly important considering that most parents and guardians have little contact with the school.

In view of the lack of clarity about the voluntary character of school council activities, this matter should be discussed openly with the school council and the community. It is important that the community understands that the school council is made up of volunteers, so as to encourage other people also to give their time. School council members already make their time and energy available, but they also need to have the material conditions (e.g. transport, mobile phone credit) to do their work – something to which the ADE fund could contribute.

We note the need to democratise the involvement of members of the school council in the activities of seeking external support, because at present these activities are concentrated in the figure of the chairperson, responsible for 'representing the School Council both internally and externally' (MINEDH 2015b: 22). As we

understand it, the *Primary School Council Support Manual* stipulates that the chairperson should be a representative either of the parents or guardians or of the community, to defend the interests of these groups, but we believe that school councils would benefit greatly if other members were also involved.

There is also a need to create, at the level of the ministry, formal mechanisms and/or spaces through which it can receive input from parents and guardians, and through which school councils can effectively participate in the preparation of education policies, strategies, and programmes – as well as in monitoring implementation and evaluating performance within the sector.

In future capacity building, the aspect of *representation* needs to be addressed more explicitly, through including modules on: (i) what it means to represent other people; and (ii) how to ensure that what is approved and carried out at the level of the school council reflects and is based on processes of consultation and negotiation of wider priorities than those of the school council's members.

This means a greater emphasis on the notions of *mediation* and *intermediation*, through which members of the school council come to be seen as the bridge between the school and the community, instead of assuming that they represent the voice of the community, without taking into account diversity, or relationships of power and authority; and excluding practices that permeate the interactions between individuals which define who can and who cannot have access to certain spaces and processes.

This is an area in which the CEP has invested, through dialogue with the district and provincial education authorities. Indeed, as a result of this dialogue, those bodies adopted the capacity building manual that has been produced, and contains modules on participation of communities and citizens' rights and duties. However, this work needs to be continued and reinforced.

Annexe Summary version of the report

1 Context

This document presents the principal communications and recommendations of the study Representation and Inclusion in School Councils, carried out under the aegis of the Citizen Engagement Programme (Programa Cidadania e Participação (CEP)), by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Sussex in the United Kingdom, together with the Centre for Learning and Capacity Building for Civil Society (Centro de Aprendizagem e Capacitação da Sociedade Civil (CESC)) – both of which are members of the CEP consortium. The study was conducted by a mixed team made up of three researchers from IDS (Alex Shankland, Erika López Franco, and Kátia Taela), CESC's advocacy and learning officer (Nárcya Chilengue), a member of the management team of the CEP (Claudino Goodyfry) and an independent consultant, who gave support with coordination of logistics and collection of data, transcription of recordings and coding (Catija Maivasse). All members of the team contributed to the preparation of the report.¹⁵

2 Objectives

The main objective of the study was to widen the knowledge base available to civil society and to government on the factors that contribute to good performance by school councils in building inclusive and effective social accountability to improve the quality of education services. The specific objectives were:

- to help strengthen support from the Ministry of Education and Human Development (Ministério da Educação e Desenvolvimento Humano (MINEDH)) to school councils through recommendations for policies, rules, and processes of learning;
- to supply significant and systematised information to the partners of the CEP and other entities operating at the district, provincial, and national levels on the factors that can help strengthen links between school councils and citizens at the local level, and between school councils and other bodies of the education management system at various levels;
- to stimulate debate and sharing of experiences between civil society organisations (CSOs) involved in strengthening social accountability and improving the quality of education;
- to generate evidence on the influence of the processes of the community scorecard (CPC) on the relationship between citizens, school councils, and the education authorities, to complement and deepen the results of other studies carried out in the ambit of the CEP.

15 This document incorporates comments and reflections generated during the International Event on Community Participation in School Management, organised by CESC in May 2017, and the International Closing Seminar of the CEP, held on 6–7 December 2017 in Maputo, to which the results of the study were presented, and also comments by Sandra Roque, of COWI.

3 Methodology

This was a qualitative study, combining primary and secondary data.

Analysis of the secondary data included review of the legal bases involved, and what public policy specifies in relation to school councils – this is summarised in Section 2.

The primary data were collected in the districts of Monapo and Rapale (in the province of Nampula), and in the district of Sussundenga (in the province of Manica).

Collection of data was preceded by a pilot operation in the district of Chokwè (Gaza province).

The fieldwork was done in six public schools that cover the full range of ages defined by the term *primary* in Mozambique – classes 1 to 7 (children broadly aged 7 to 13) – and are classified as type 1 schools on the numerical scale because they have more than 1,500 pupils registered.¹⁶

Distribution: two schools in Gaza (Chokwè district) were chosen, two in Nampula (one in Rapale and one in Monapo), and a further two in Manica (both in the district of Sussundenga).

The fieldwork gave priority to locations where the CEP and CESC have activities, and took place between May and June 2017.

The study focused on provincial and district levels, though important inputs were collected from the central level, during the International Seminar organised by CESC in May 2017.

3.1 Methods of data collection

We carried out semi-structured interviews with employees of the Provincial Directorate of Education and Human Development (DPEDH) (1) and the District Services for Education, Youth and Technology (SDEJT) (4), with representatives of CSOs that implemented the CEP (3), and with school head teachers (6).

Further to this, focus group discussions were held with the facilitators of the CEP who operate in the schools we visited (3), and with members of the school councils (4). In two schools it was not possible to hold the focus groups with all members of the school council and for this reason we opted to hold interviews with smaller groups – with representatives of the teachers and technical/administrative staff, of the pupils, of the community, and of the parents and guardians. This strategy turned out to be significant because it enabled us to obtain more detailed information on how these representatives perceive their role, since more people spoke in smaller groups than in larger focus groups. Due to the importance of the point of view of the pupils in the study, we also carried out focus groups only with pupils (6). We used participative and ethnographic techniques that would encourage all members of the group to participate and which would capture their viewpoints on the issues in question, rather than testing hypotheses developed by the research team. This observation was of great importance for capturing

16 Type 2 schools are those with between 500 and 1,500 pupils; type 3 are those with less than 500.

interactions between members of the school council and for mapping power relationships.

4 Main conclusions and recommendations of the study

4.1 Representation

The conceptualisation of *representation* and *mediation* as ‘taking messages to and fro between different spaces and levels’ leads us to ask: whose perceptions, demands, or priorities do members of the school council represent? It is in search of an answer to this question that it becomes important to look at *inclusion* in the processes of representation and mediation.

Representation and mediation determine the quality of the connections between the school council and other spaces, whether at the level of the community – for the choice of representatives and for establishing perceptions and choosing priorities – or at other levels of governance, in terms of the quest for support for resolving problems that cannot be solved locally.

Main challenges of *representation* found in the investigation:

- The type of understanding that the school community has on **what representation means** – it being perceived more as being the voice of the community than taking messages in both directions between the school and the community. Although school councils comprise representatives of various groups, there is a major gap in the way they work when it comes to representation.
- School councils tend to be more at the service of the school than of the community: excessive obedience to authority and hierarchy leads to greater priority being given to issues that are important for teachers or head teachers as opposed to pupils.
- The way in which these representatives are chosen:
 - The main channels used by head teachers to disseminate information about the election of the school council are the community leaders and, in some cases, faith leaders. In none of the schools visited did anyone talk about using community radio or local, or wall, newspapers.
 - Usually those who take part in an election process are close to the school and/or to its head teacher, or close to the community leaders.
- Limited diversity in composition of school councils: the representatives of the community and the school council are most frequently political-party leaders, leaders in local governance, and religious leaders, or people working in development projects, who live close to the schools.
- To be a member of the school council does not automatically mean having voice and power of influence; the study reveals the difficulties school council members face in identifying actors whom they can work with, and/or to whom they can channel problems they identify – i.e. in exercising the power of advocacy.

Recommendations for improving the representativeness of school councils

- i Continue efforts at 'renewal' ('revitalisation') of school councils in every school in the country, aiming to make them not only the result of changes in members' personal, professional, and academic life, but also:
 - To balance relationships of power, and to replace people 'who think themselves owners of the school council' because they have been in the position a long time.
 - To ensure the very credibility and legitimacy of the body in its relationship with residents of the area covered by the school.
 - To show how important it is that members should be active, and that they should show they are capable of carrying out the functions required of them.
- ii Ensure that the following principles are observed in selection of members:
 - Scope for open candidacy – pre-selection by local authorities, leaders, and head teachers should be avoided.
 - The importance of secret votes – since people have a tendency to feel compelled to choose certain (influential) people when the vote is not secret.
 - Support and incentives for diversity of gender and age – and also in terms of people who live further away the school.
 - Avoid school councils becoming one-party entities, by promoting involvement of local leaders of other political parties.
- iii Learning/individual development:
 - Reinforce the message that the school council defends the interests of the community within the school, and not only of the school within the community.
 - The learning/development initiative should include modules about representation, participation, and rights and duties.
 - Encourage and document spaces for dialogue between members of the school council representing different groups, and also between them and the groups they represent.
- iv Representation of school councils in different spaces and levels:
 - Create spaces and moments of consultation and dialogue between MINEDH and school councils at district, provincial, and national levels.
 - Open a space for participation of the representatives of the school council in the processes of preparation of education policies and strategies, and also in evaluating the performance of the sector.

4.2 Inclusion

One of the principles behind the creation of school councils was to make school management more inclusive. For this to happen, school councils themselves need to be inclusive, and adopt strategies that encourage the participation of people who would otherwise remain at the margins of both the school and the school's management. Further, even if a given group of people has access to a space, there are various ways in which power can operate to exclude their opinions or silence their voices. For example: (i) the rules of patriarchal power can prevent women having a voice in decisions; and (ii) the use of technical language (or simply of the official national language in zones where most people only express themselves in the local language) can intimidate people with a lower level of schooling. These forms of 'invisible power' can reinforce the inequalities that result from formal rules and networks of influence, and even further exclude the people who are already the poorest and most marginalised. Inclusion determines which perceptions and priorities are incorporated into the processes of representation, and which issues are taken to other levels.

Main challenges of inclusion observed in the investigation:

- Most of the school councils that we visited were made up of people who live in the immediate local neighbourhood in which the school is located. Some people we interviewed perceived this disparity as positive, saying that it facilitates communication, holding of meetings, and solving of problems. However, weak or non-existent representation in the school council of neighbourhoods further away from the school has implications for the connection between the school and the residents of those neighbourhoods.
- Though the presence of women varies, in most of the school councils we visited there were more men than women. While this does not necessarily reflect the composition of the school council, the participation of women is an element that needs to be given careful consideration.
- Age is a structuring element of power and hierarchy relationships in Mozambique – but learning content at present tends to neglect the way in which age affects interactions between members of the school council and between them and other people they engage with. The content of training sessions is directed at adult school council members only.
- The concept of promoting access for and retention of children with special educational needs is currently far beyond the capacity of schools and school councils. Head teachers talk of the difficulties they face in supporting children with disabilities, due to lack of appropriate training and material, as well as social discrimination.

Recommendations for making school councils more inclusive

- i MINEDH should allocate human and financial resources to, or make partnerships to ensure, social inclusion in primary schools:
 - Create clear instruments with specific orientations on how school council members can and should identify orphaned and vulnerable children.

- Ensure more training for all the school council members about disability and special educational needs.
- Promote the representation in school councils of parents and guardians of children with disabilities and also activists and professionals who work with these children.
- ii Considerably improve dissemination of information on the process of constituting a school council:
 - Avoid informing the community only through community leaders and religious faiths: ensure that residents of the more distant areas covered by the school also have access to and information about the process, the possibility of becoming members, and its significance and meaning.
 - Ensure that the mass communication media that are available free of charge are used, but also develop specific strategies for more direct communication with vulnerable and disabled children, and their parents/guardians.

Main challenges of inclusion of pupils that were observed in the investigation:

- The interactions that were observed during the focus group discussions pointed to the need to think about how to improve the involvement of pupils, to ensure that they can effectively help and influence the work of the school council and the school itself, in contexts in which age is a structuring element of power and hierarchy relationships.
- We did not find any school council in which the pupil members meet with other pupils, even to identify and discuss issues they would like to talk about to other members of the school council.
- There are some sensitive issues affecting pupils that need to be dealt with, such as sexual harassment and early marriages. We observed various attempts at informal mediation and resolution of this type of problem, but no formal complaints were made through the school councils.

Recommendations for improving inclusion among pupils

- i We suggest there should be initiatives to strengthen the voice and autonomy of pupils:
 - Ensure that pupils have access to learning information about school councils, and preferably that sessions are organised separately from adults so as to enable children to express their doubts and desires more openly.
 - Ensure that there are lectures on, and work to strengthen, children's abilities: the content of teaching tends to neglect the way in which age affects interactions between members of the school council, and between them and others they engage with.
 - Ensure that the other members of the school council are made aware of how age and hierarchy can negatively influence the participation of children in the school council and its performance as a whole.

- ii Clarify with pupil members their role as representatives of the interests of pupils, and not as representatives of the preferences of school heads and teachers.
 - There is a need to carry out group work and discussions between pupils only (facilitated by a class leader or a teacher whom the pupils trust) before meetings with adults, so as to prepare them for those meetings.
 - Pupils who already have good relationships with the other pupils should be invited to be members of school councils: for example, class leaders – since they already hold a position of leadership in the school and are the people who channel the concerns of the pupils to the supervising year teachers and school management.

4.3 Support and monitoring of school councils

Analysis of operational questions on the workings of school councils was not a focus of the study, but over the course of the fieldwork we identified some aspects that could improve their functioning and practices.

- i There is a need to ensure minimum standards of quality and performance in the renewals of membership, for example:
 - renewals of school councils should be accompanied by regular supervision and mentoring – and annual refresher courses;
 - they should be accompanied by provision of materials appropriate for each representative group within school councils, including pupils.
- ii Provision should be made for exchanges of experience between school councils that have good practices for rendering of financial accounts, and those in the same postal district or at least in the same neighbourhood that still have a weak link between the school council and the community in general.
- iii A system of non-monetary incentive for school council members, such as public recognition for their work in the form of a diploma or certificate, should be considered.

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